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THE PRIMA DONNA of the SLOMS

By

STANLEY McKENNA



ILLUSTRATED

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"GOD, GRAVENOIRE! WHAT IS THAT?"

✓
A PRIMA DONNA

OF THE SLUMS

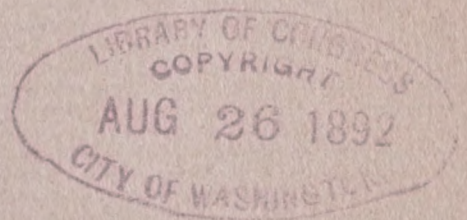
A STORY OF INTRIGUE OF THE DAYS OF THE
THIRD NAPOLEON

ADAPTED FROM THE FRENCH

BY

STANLEY McKENNA

ILLUSTRATED



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A PRIMA DONNA OF THE SLUMS

I

THE CONSPIRATORS

They were at dinner in a restaurant—a party of four, two young girls and two men. The men were father and son. The girls the daughter of one and sister of the other man and the *fiancee* of the younger man.

The restaurant was the famous Italian house, Regent Street, London, near Regent Circus, known as the Arditì.

They were French people on a visit in England, and evidently enjoying themselves heartily. They were in a large private room, and considered themselves as much at home as if they had been in their own house in Paris.

It was a cold, wet night in April, 1854, and the clock in the big gilded tower at Westminster had just struck seven o'clock.

The restaurant was crowded. In a room

adjoining the French family sat two men. One was about forty, tall, stout and strong, with long black hair, and a pointed beard. His clothes had seen their best days, and his linen had not been put on fresh that morning, but he carried himself with an easy familiarity that indicated he cared little for such matters and assumed the importance of a man flourishing round in a court suit.

You would have said at a glance that he was an Italian, and at a second that he was an artist, a professor of languages, or a musician. He was so sure of himself that nothing disturbed him. The large napkin was stuffed under his chin, and spread out ostentatiously in front of him. He swallowed large spoonfuls of soup, making an unpleasant noise as he did so, and followed that with a large plate of everything on the table, taking great mouthfuls, and washing it all down with beer and Moselle. The other was an old man. He watched the professor at work, himself scarcely touching the meats spread out before him. He was unquestionably a gentleman and a foreigner. He wore evening dress, and everything about his person was scrupulously exact. He was tall, slight, and somewhat bald, and

had a good deal of the appearance of an ecclesiastic light in the church.

"Per Bacco," exclaimed the professor, throwing himself back in his chair to take breath, and tossing his mass of black hair behind his head. "What a dinner!"

"Pardon, Marino," said the other, "the waiter serving us is an Italian. Speak French or English, and be prudent."

"Then we are to have a serious talk, your excellency."

"Yes."

"Well, let us speak French, although it is a half-barbarous, nasal jargon, as our grand Alfieri has so perfectly qualified it. Your excellency, I am in capital vein for a talk—I feel at ease here. A cook worthy of Apicius, wines that Horace would have sung, and all beneath the encouraging smiles of the most magnificent of Mæcenæas."

Then, lowering his tone, he added, "No spies, no detectives, none of the police abominations of M. Bonaparte. Ah! that M. Bonaparte!"

And then he began to eat again as if he wished to lay in something for the next day.

"Have you received any news of the gentleman of the 'Young Italy' party? suddenly

asked the old man whom Marino called "excellency."

He spoke slowly, and accented his words in a manner to make it understood that he attached importance to the answer.

"None," replied Marino; "profound silence, therefore a great project is under way."

"Or rather a great apostasy, fool?"

"Oh! your excellency!"

"Do you, sometimes, read the Swiss and German reviews?"

"No."

"Do, and you will see that Mazzini has taken up the pen again. He no longer borrows people's money, he steals their thoughts with effrontery. A variation in the bandit business. Now this illustrious Joseph writes about 'Liberty with Christ, Freedom through the Evangel.' He has become the prophet of the ideal. The Vatican will, no doubt, send him its benediction. I repeat, this silence means a base apostasy."

Marino sat up, and pushing away from him the empty plate, said with much earnestness:

"A renegade, he, the liberator of Rome! Never! He was the defender of the Eternal City."

"And I?" cried his excellency, throwing away his napkin, and rising from the table. "Perhaps I was not there! Maybe I was not present at the siege of Rome! Maybe I was not a member of the Constituent Assembly, and a soldier of Italy; but I was not discoursing in the great halls, I was fighting. The enemy, the French of M. Bonaparte, took me off the ground at the barricade Portese, dying, and my body covered with wounds."

"Oh, certainly," said Marino, trying to calm the anger of the old man. "His excellency had a sublime, an antique soul, a Cocles, a god of Mars, a paladin worthy of the capital."

"That's a mistake, my friend, for to-day the Mazzinians respect me. I am, it appears, an incapable, a spy, a traitor! Yes, a traitor, I have been called so. I know it—oh! ungrateful country!"

"Phew! countries are always ingrates! But, as Pasta used to sing, the divine, *Dolce ingrati patria*; Ingrate, and still so soft, so sweet, so smiling!"

A profound silence followed the allusion to the venerated cavatina, and his excellency stretched himself on a divan.

"Now, Marino," he said, "yes or no, have you received any news?"

"Well, yes," replied Marino, approaching the old man mysteriously. "You remember a man who served under your orders in the legion of the 'Reds?'—a brave, big fellow, named Pianori?"

"Evening papers! Important dispatches from France!" shouted a boy in the street.

Confused exclamations floated up from the street.

The two men listened, breathless. "Abominable attempt on the life of the French Emperor," called out the boy.

The two Italians looked at one another in the eye, his excellency rang the bell. The waiter entered. "Go and buy me that paper," he cried, "Quick! Quick!"

The waiter disappeared, and soon after re-entered the room with the paper in his hand. The old man took it and read aloud:

"Last dispatches. Paris, 5 o'clock.—A man named Pianori fired several pistol shots at the Emperor of the French to-day as he was driving along the avenue of the Champs-Elysees—Napoleon was not injured. The assassin was seized by the crowd, and almost torn to pieces. He was rescued by the police and found to be dangerously wounded."

No other details of the affair were given. Under the dispatch from France were several from Italy. His excellency read again:

"Naples, 10 o'clock a. m.—The first representation of a new ballet called 'Women and Flowers' was given last night before a brilliant audience at the Theatre San Carlo. The auditorium was brilliantly decorated, and the company highly distinguished. The work was received with enthusiasm and the dancers were recalled seven times."

The paper fell out of the old man's hands, and the ex-member of the Roman Assembly sank heavily on a chair. He bent his head, as if under the weight of some hopeless shame; his words came slowly and heavily, and the tears stood in his eyes. "Another scaffold!" he gasped; "always our blood, always, and whilst we sweat with grief, this miserable Italy sings, dances, and makes love—patta! Well, nation without shame, if such is thy destiny, may it be accomplished!"

He struck the table a heavy blow.

"For myself, I have enough of it. Enough of my exile without end, of my vagabond wanderings around the world, of this life of a wild beast hunted by the police. Oh! you

of 'Young Italy' affect disdain for my gray hairs, so be it! Henceforth these white locks shall not bend before you! I shall put an end to the comedy, and take up my liberty again."

"What liberty?" asked Marino, making an effort at a smile.

"I shall become myself again, and have only one master, myself."

He rose and paced the room, gesticulating as he did so, becoming excited from the noise of his own words.

"Yes, I am resolved," he cried. "I shall write to the Cardinal's secretary of state tomorrow. I knew M. Antonelli in the past."

"What! you are going to write to that man?"

"Yes. I shall solicit my pardon, and my amnesty is certain. Thunder! I must be like the others."

He lit a cigar, and again stretched himself out on the sofa. He shut his eyes and, blowing spiral columns of smoke toward the ceiling, went on:

"At last I see thee once more, O my Ravenna, O my country! And thou also, my cherished palace of the Porta Semata, so long abandoned. Ah! happy Italy, mad with joy.

All to joy then, to music, to song, to dance, to love. No more politics, sentimental fooleries; no more misery! Nothing but brazen pleasures, masquerades without end, a carnival without a Lent! Besides, my solitude has become unbearable and oppresses me. I have a great mind to try marriage."

"Marriage," sighed Marino softly, as he went over and took a seat near the sofa. "Your excellency forgets your sixty and odd years."

"Sixty-three, professor, I know it. And for that reason I shall contract a marriage in harmony with my illusions—a marriage in accordance with the ethics of my country. I shall seek some handsome prima donna on the stage of San Carlo, a star of the light fantastic; and if I do not find her there, I shall try the ballet at La Scala."

"Your excellency is joking."

"I never joke."

"And the portraits of your ancestors—the great warriors who died on the field of honor, who in your palace, day and night, will be looking on—what might they have said at seeing such a 'can-can'?"

II

THE ENEMY

The old man jumped to his feet in a towering rage, and would have hurled a knife at the musician, but a heavy fall and a groan in the next room attracted his attention and unnerved his arm. He stood listening, with a face as white as his ample shirt-front, not knowing what had happened, and fearing the worst. Marino put his finger to his lips and stole on tiptoe to the partition separating the two rooms. It was composed of thin planks covered with ordinary wall paper. Marino touched the paper gently with the point of his fingers, and felt round until he found a spot where the timbers were not closely joined. He then took out his penknife and with the large blade cut the paper in the shape of a tongue. He pushed that back, and was fortunate to have discovered a slit that would show what was passing on the other side—unfortunately the way was still blocked by

the paper in the adjoining room. Marino made light of that and soon had a loophole.

He gazed through it carefully for some time, and then turned back to the old man, dismay and fear blanching his rounded cheeks. He put his hands over his mouth and whispered in the old man's ear: "The enemy!"

"Police?" gasped his excellency.

"Count Brutus Besnard, one of the councilors of state of M. Napoleon, and his son Marcel."

"The man who murdered Lavetti."

"After having run away with his wife."

The old man grasped a knife, and was making for the door, but Marino held him in his powerful arms and shook his head.

"He was the friend of my boyhood, my brother in arms—the bravest of the brave. I will avenge him."

"It has been sworn, leave it to steadier hands."

The old man fell on the sofa in deep distress. Marino laid him back against it tenderly and went over once more to the peep-hole.

After a while his excellency recovered, and in turn went to examine the people in the next apartment.

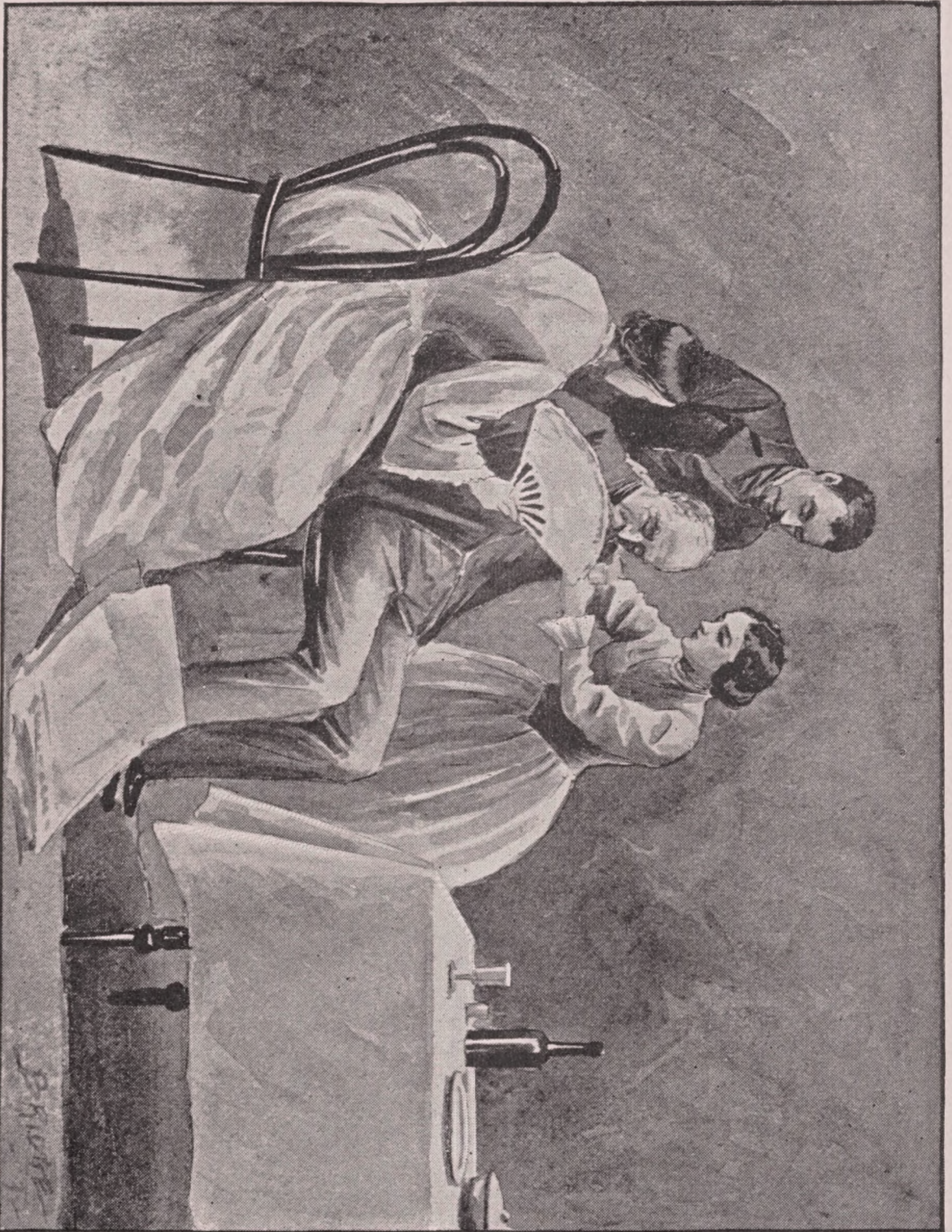
The young man stood at the back of his father's chair, supporting him in it, while the daughter was giving him brandy. At his feet lay the evening paper. The second young lady was fanning the old man, who appeared to be just recovering from a severe shock.

It was evident that he too had heard the noises in the streets, and the boys calling out the dispatches in the evening papers. He had sent for one, and the news had struck him down. "My beloved master!" he cried, as he sank in a heap. Those present went to his assistance, and were bringing him to when the old man saw him.

A physician was sent for, and ordered the count to be laid out on the sofa against the wall. Marcel Besnard said that they desired to return to Paris at once, in consequence of the attempt on the Emperor's life, but the doctor refused to allow the count to be removed for several hours.

As the count lay on the sofa his face was turned toward the old man and Marino, and they could watch its painful workings.

"Ah! brigand!" exclaimed the old man, "you are suffering now, but you little cared what you inflicted when you enticed away his



AT HIS FEET LAY THE EVENING PAPER.

beautiful wife, and drove a dagger in his breast. They tried to kill your friend, did they? The day will come when they will pay you the same compliment. Assassin!" he hissed between his teeth.

Marino drew him away, lest by some imprudence he should reveal their presence, and placed him once more on the sofa.

"By Jove, your excellency, you seem to have grown young and heavy again."

"I have, Marino; I have! I am back in the days of the bells, in the days when I roamed the mountains with my friend. Ah!"

Marino placed his hand over the old man's mouth, and the latter grasped his wrists with a grasp of iron. The professor winced.

III

THE PRIMA DONNA

Presently the old man rose, and going to the window pushed it open. Marino followed him, fearful of an incautious burst. He went out on the balcony, and leaned over the railing. The professor did the same. They were looking up and down the crowded street when a street band stopped in front of the house. It was accompanied by a young girl who sang. There were violins that rasped dreadfully and a harp out of tune. The girl sang the Brindisi of Traviata, that "Libi amo ne lieti calici," so popular all over the world.

"Nice voice," said Marino, "but no method. Ah, if I had only been able to give her some lessons."

"Good!" cried the old man. "Good, little girl! Here's a shilling for you," and he flung the coin to her. "Now come up here, and sing us a little song."

The girl raised her head, finished her bra-

vura, and entered the house. A few seconds later she tapped on the door.

Marino let her in.

She was a superb creature, young, dashing, with the dark skin of the Italian, and deep violet eyes. The raven hair tumbled to the hips twined in heavy cords, and was bound up in front with a gold pin. The features recalled, in their purity, the lovely women of the Trastevere idealized to divinity by the marvelous Sanzio. She was strangely dressed. She wore a costume aiming at comic opera. The petticoat was red, and had been, probably, the garment of some public favorite. It was purchased, no doubt, from the refuse of the Covent Garden Theater; and now decked out a figure matchless in its graceful flowing outline. The skirt was gauzy and trimmed with gold lace. The bodice was white, decorated with artificial flowers, and at the throat was a bunch of wild roses. She walked into the middle of the room, this prima donna of the slums, and stood gazing at the two men. She revealed her pearly even teeth as she smiled and bowed.

"Here I am, sir," she said, addressing the old man, after having carefully studied both.

"What shall I sing you—'Santa Lucia?' Oh! but you have no piano here to accompany me."

The old man put his glasses on his eyes to examine the young woman.

"That's true," he said, "we have not. So you speak French, my dear."

"Yes, sir, my father was a teacher at Marseilles."

"You were born in France then?"

"No, sir," proudly, "in Rome, at the Borgo."

"The daughter of a professor, excuse me, you must be quite learned."

"Yes, I know everything, even to ignoring what I ought not to know."

She laughed, observing that the men laughed also.

The old man replied, pointing to the wild roses at her throat:

"Give me the bouquet, little one."

"Never, it is a talisman."

"Against the evil eye?"

"Your own is not so good. No, I like these flowers, my father was very fond of them."

"Well said. Hurrah for sentiment! What is your name?"

"Bella."

"That's your professional name, but the other, the real one."

She shrugged her shoulders.

"Won't you tell me?"

"No."

"Why?"

"I don't wish to."

"Ho, ho! There is a secret attached to it, out with it."

She hesitated a moment, and looking straight at both men said:

"You are Italians; so am I; my name is Rosina Lavetti."

Both jumped to their feet, and she stood like a queen before them.

"La-vet-ti!" gasped the old man.

"Hush!" whispered Marino.

"Scipione Lavetti!"

"My father. He was murdered by a Frenchman, while aiding the sacred cause of liberty in France. The miserable wretch! I have sworn to plant a stiletto in his heart! It was in Provence, after the *Coup d'Etat*, during the great insurrection in the Midi. He had previously broken my mother's heart. She left the righting of the wrong to me, and I am strong enough to accomplish it. My mother

fled with me here, and died in a garret. She taught me all she could while yet alive, and then I had to take to the streets to make a living—but some day, some day!”

“The day has come.”

“What do you mean? Do not jest with me! I am a child of the slums. I have starved and thirsted, I have been kicked and cuffed, and beaten and robbed. I am used to everything. Don’t try to play with me.”

“I mean what I say, the day has come!”

“Look here,” she cried, going up to the old man. “My father was your friend.”

“He was.”

“I am twenty-two, I am not ugly; revenge him, and I will give myself up to you body and soul.”

“Hush!” he whispered, and led her stealthily to the crack in the partition.

“You see the old man?”

“Yes.”

“That is the assassin.”

“Besnard!” And she made a dart for the door. The men were watching her, however, and intercepted her.

“Let me go; let me go!” she cried, as she struggled to get free.

"No, no, not here, not now. You see the young man?"

"Yes."

"That is his son."

"Fine-looking man."

"It is through him we must first strike," whispered Marino.

"I understand," said Rose.

"The light-haired young woman is his promised wife."

"He shall never marry her."

"The other is his sister."

"I will destroy them all, she cried, clutching her ears with her sunburned hands. They moved back into the room away from the split.

"Come and see me, Rose."

"When?"

"To-morrow," said the old man.

"What street?"

"Piccadilly, number 3."

"Whom shall I ask for?"

"Prince Guido de Carpegna."

IV

JACK

Rose joined her companions on the street, and informed them she was not going to sing any more that night. They were used to sudden changes of mind in her, so they just shrugged their shoulders, and walked away. She ran to her little room in Soho, changed her costume for a black dress and hat, and then set off, at full speed, for a certain set of chambers in the Temple. A young barrister by the name of Jack Burroughs occupied these chambers. He was a light-haired giant, with mustache enough to serve two men. He had bright blue eyes, regular features, and skin as fair as a woman's. He was slow of movement, slow of speech, slow to quarrel or make love, slow in everything, but especially tardy in the matter of bills. Jack was not rich, and as yet he had not achieved sufficient reputation to bring him much business. He was patiently waiting for it, however, and as it

was slow in coming, it appeared to Jack that it was approaching naturally. He was lying on a sofa, smoking, when Rose entered the room.

"Hallo! Rose," he exclaimed, as he put his feet on the floor and sat up. "I've been rather expecting you, I don't know why."

"That's curious," she answered, "for here I am. It shows, too, that you think of me sometimes, Jack."

"I think of you all the time, beauty. I am glad you came, though it's a good deal earlier than your regular hour."

"Does my presence inconvenience you?"

"No, but the fact is, I would have made some little preparation in the way of fire and supper."

"Yes, Jack, your fire is abominably low for a cold night, and it is a very cold night—I am chilled to the bone. Put some coal on."

"I would, dear, but the fact is Brazier promised to be back an hour ago, and has not yet put in an appearance, and Mrs. Todbury has been out of sorts all day."

"So much so that she won't come down and make up the fire? You owe her a bill, of course."

"I am afraid, beauty, I owe a bill to everybody, you included."

"No, you paid me back what I lent you."

"I am glad to hear it. I don't remember it."

"Ring and get Mrs. Todbury down, give her that half crown, and tell her to bring some coal and make up a fire. This room smells like a grave."

"I think I won't ring, beauty; she might not answer the bell. These old women are so peculiar. I'll just step up and talk to her—the money will settle the business."

"Hurry up; I want you to take me out to supper."

Jack flew up the stairs; Rose paced the room until he came back.

"Put on your hat and coat, and take me to a good place, Jack. I am dreadfully hungry."

"All right, beauty, you shall have the finest in the town. I am in good appetite myself; for, to be candid with you, through Brazier's want of punctuality I missed my dinner."

"Make up for it in the supper, Jack. There is the money."

"Phew! You must have found a pocket-book."

"Never mind, Jack, let us go and enjoy ourselves."

"All right, come along."

They had a good dinner, and plenty of wine, and when it was all over Jack said:

"Now, let us go and see whether Mrs. Todbury has made a good fire."

"All right, Jack, I am ready."

They started for the rooms, and sure enough, Mrs. Todbury had done her work well. The hearth was blazing, and the room smelled like an oven. Rose was delighted with it, and stood on the sofa and sang to Jack. She then danced a *pas seul*, and he almost made his hands sore applauding her.

"Now, Jack," she said, "lie down on the sofa as you were when I came in, and I will sit here on the carpet beside you, for I want to have a serious talk with you."

"All right, beauty," said Jack, stretching himself at full length on the sofa.

"Pipe?"

"No, I want to hear the talk."

"My gentle savage," she exclaimed, taking his head between her hands and kissing his eyes. "My loving, darling Jack."

"Say, beauty, there's something the matter."

"There is, and you are to listen to it and not say a word. Do you promise me to keep quiet?"

"I promise."

"Jack, I am going to leave you. This is the last night we shall be together. Not a word, not a sound. It is hard on me to go, don't make it harder. I love you, Jack, love you, love you! Oh! God! how it strains my heart to leave you. But I must go, Jack. I am not going to any one else; I could not do that. I am going away! you shall never see or hear of me again—now stop, you gave me your word and you always keep your word to me. You want to say that I have been tempted to join a band of what you call, 'those murderous ruffians in Windmill Street.' I have not. I have joined no band of conspirators. I will not. This is a family affair—my family; my mother; my father—I am going on business they left behind for me to do—a sacred duty, and I am going about it. I have been waiting this for years; it has come, I must obey the summons. Now, Jack, if you love me, and have any little lingering respect for my memory, and the happy nights and days we have passed together, let me go in peace. The

dream is over, let us wake up to the realities of life. Don't try to follow me, don't try to seek me out; you could not find me, although I am not going to be shut up, but I shall be in a strange land, among strange people, and your home is here in England."

She broke down and sobbed aloud.

Jack sat up and gazed into the fire.

He lit his pipe, and sat down to smoke. He got up and leisurely paced the room. He stood in front of the fire, his legs wide apart, a coat-tail on each arm, and said:

"Rose, I'd find you if you went to live on the Himalaya mountains, and when I found you I'd go after you."

"No, no, Jack, you would not do that."

"I would."

"Not after I had forbidden you."

"Just the same. I may have to walk, but I would reach there."

"Oh, Jack! Oh, Jack, that would be cruel to me, and may hinder the purpose of my life."

"Sorry."

"I asked you not to make it harder for me than it is, and you are making it harder. I thought you would be kind, and meet me in this trouble in your own sweet, gentle, loving

way, but I see that you are selfish, egotistical, mean."

"Beauty, tell me the whole story."

"I can't."

"Do you fear me?"

"I do, I do, I do! I fear no one nor anything but you, and I fear you. I fear myself when you are near me."

"Show me it is for your advantage and I shall remain where I am."

"I cannot, no, I cannot."

"Then there is some dark mystery behind it that will not bear the light of day; it now becomes my duty to scent that out."

"No, Jack, no, you won't do that. You won't try it. There, I won't go, I'll stay—you have conquered me, and broken down the purpose of my life."

She rushed over to him and threw her arms around his neck.

"Be a sensible little woman, and things will come out all right. I know these low-browed fellows that hang around the back alleys are always trying to get you in their clutches, but you keep away from them, and no harm will come to me. They are not near so fierce as they look."

"Oh! Jack! oh! Jack," she sobbed, and he lifted her in his arms like an infant. He placed her beside him on the seat, and kissed away her tears. She looked up smiling at him at last, but if he could have read her heart he would have seen a great grief there that she would soon be compelled to deceive him—that she was not frank, not honest with him, as she desired to be, but deceiving him to ward off suffering and gain time.

V

THE CHANGE

Rose appeared at No. 3 Piccadilly the following morning at eleven o'clock. The prince was up, and waiting to receive her. He bowed courteously as she entered his presence and motioned her to a seat.

"You have not changed since last night, I see."

"No."

"You will in future be known as the Princess Carpegna; you will be introduced to the fashionable people in the French capital; we start for there as soon as you can get ready."

"It may take me some time to prepare for such a sudden change as that."

"Not so long as you imagine. In the next room you will see a lady whom you can consult on the matter of attire; when you have talked with her, you will find breakfast, and your most humble servant, waiting."

She bowed and left the room.

He could not help admiring the waving lines of her graceful figure as she passed out of the door.

The woman in the next room knew her business. She had come prepared with everything. In half an hour she had Rose looking like the princess she was to be in future. Rose was somewhat taller than the woman had anticipated, and the traveling dresses and cloaks had to be changed. When Rose removed her old black dress, and the other things she had gone there in, she called the maid to make a parcel of them; she had them done up in a white cloth and the letter "J" marked on the outside of it.

"Why, you don't want to keep these things, princess," said the woman in amazement.

"I do," replied Rose; "put them at the bottom of the trunk."

When she returned to the prince he could hardly believe his eyes. She wore a heavily embroidered white satin wrapper with a long train of ruby plush. She walked with a slow and easy carriage that well became her, and one would have thought, looking at her, that she had never quitted the purple of her ancestors.

"Blood will tell," thought the count; "she is regal."

He gave his arm and led her to the dining-room beyond. He seated her, and took a chair opposite. After breakfast they returned to the sitting-room.

"Princess," said the old man, "we are going to Paris to take up the work of justice. I will give you a foremost place, and everything but the legal right to my name. I will ask nothing in return but a strict performance of duty, and the pleasure of dining with you once in a while."

She bowed.

"You shall be free, absolutely free, only I warn you against obstructive alliances.

"I shall obey you in all things."

"If there should be any little affair here in England"—

"I am here, sir, to carry out a sacred trust, and I shall accomplish it without flinching."

"Oh! yes. Well, I won't refer to that again. I leave you now to your maid; we start in two hours."

He rose and left her.

Rose stood on the deck of the boat looking back as it sailed away from England. She

was thinking of Jack, "dear old Jack." She had a tightening at the heart when she remembered she had left without even saying good-bye to him, being compelled to content herself with kissing the frame of the door on the sly as she left the house. She wondered what he was doing at that moment, and thinking about. She would never see him again; he was lost to her forever.

VI

AN IMPERIAL WEDNESDAY

On the evening of November 24, 1856, the palace of the Tuileries was brilliantly illuminated.

Several lines of carriages stood in the Place du Carrousel, leaving women in evening dress and men in uniform at the entrance. It was the first ball of the winter season, an official Wednesday.

The rooms were very crowded, and the dancing was already quite animated when Viscount Marcel Besnard, just out of his club, appeared in the midst of the guests.

He was a man about twenty-eight years of age, tall, of fine presence, dark, with a flashing black eye. He had the manners and dress of the fashionable young men of the period, a long mustache, pointed at the ends, imperial, hair parted in the middle, the dash and vigor of the Parisian. He wore the costume of a secretary of the Council of State

—a blue frock with facings, embroidered collar, white trousers, straight sword, hat with feathers carelessly tossed on the band. With a glance he swept the first gallery, where the people were so thick it was almost impossible to move through them. By making artful detours, however, he managed to reach the Marshal's Hall. He was stopped at the threshold; a triple line of men and women barred his passage. At that moment the Emperor was dancing a quadrille, and people were rushing from every room to see him.

Besnard retraced his steps, and took a seat in one of the ante-chambers, tired and out of sorts. Before him spread out the dancers, mostly persons of the inferior public life. The Marshal's Hall was reserved for the high dignities and the foreign ambassadors.

Marcel watched the coming and going like a man long familiar with the splendors of the imperial Wednesdays, when suddenly his attention was called in another direction.

"And how is the greatest of viscounts?" said a young man to him, wearing the uniform of foreign affairs.

"Is that you, Gravenoire!" said Marcel.

"How are you, old chap? Heavens! what a horrible jam!"

"It appears there are over a thousand invitations, the flower of the Empire! What a bouquet! How is Count Bésnard?"

"My father? Much better, thanks. He has come back from the seaside, and has resumed his work in the State Council."

"I am happy to hear such good news of him. What was the matter?"

"A nervous affection, the doctors did not seem to understand it. But, in spite of that, he is now, thank heaven, entirely restored."

"Are you alone, count?"

"Absolutely alone, with my fatigue."

"Your sister did not accompany you?"

Marcel shrugged his shoulders. "No, she remained with her father. Besides, you know she never goes out. God! Gravenoire! What is that?"

Gravenoire turned in the direction of his friend's eyes, and saw a young woman, sitting in a chair, surrounded by a circle of admirers. She was resplendently beautiful. Dark, very dark, with deep violet eyes, superb shoulders, and a form that might be copied for a Venus. Her raven hair, wavy in front,

fell back in long tresses, that graciously framed the oval face. She wore a garland of wild roses, glittering with diamonds, and in her corsage a bouquet of the same flowers.

She lounged carelessly in the chair, displaying, almost on the knees of her neighbors, the amplitude of her yellow satin robe, with triple flounces of black lace. She toyed with a large marabout fan, folding it, opening it, and covering her face with it, in a series of movements coquettish and meditative. She was surrounded by men of all ages, old beaux and young fellows, and each sought a smile with equal intensity. They elbowed one another to keep near her, and practiced their wit to entertain her.

This wonderful person was unquestionably enjoying herself. At every jest, a little risky, she threw herself back in the chair, and swung the fan. Her eyes danced with pleasure, and it was easy to see she was accustomed to flattery. In one of her sudden twists the dress drew up, exposing the foot, and then there was a burst of admiration. She corrected the indiscretion of her petticoats at once, and frowned at the men. It was a merry frown, however, and no one took it seriously.

"What is that woman?" asked the count of his friend.

Gravenoire looked at him in astonishment.

"You don't know her? That is Rose."

"What Rose?"

"You pain me, count. Have you become a hermit? You don't know Rose, the society beauty of the day, the Princess de Carpegna?"

Marcel laughed.

"I don't know her," he said, "but I am willing to. That's a singular name she's got. Where did she get it? In the slums?"

"No, indeed; she is a *bona fide* princess. The Carpegnas are an illustrious family of the Romagna. Dante has devoted a whole verse to them in the purgatory of the 'Divine Comedy.' She was a Countess d'A Prata. Her family belonged to the old nobility of Ravenna; but of that I only affirm what I have heard. However it may be, she is a charming woman. I was presented to her last year at Venice. She occupied a palace on the grand canal—received the cream of society, and lived in grand style."

Marcel was examining her attentively, studying her at a distance, as it were, with his glass in his eye.

"She is very beautiful, no doubt about that. But what an odd toilet. A garland of red roses with a yellow satin dress. I don't like strangers."

"She is quite Parisian in her style, however, the beautiful Rose. She pretends to promise everything to everybody and accords nothing."

"Ah!"

"Quite true."

"But what an affectation that is, to wear the Austrian colors."

"That is done, probably, in honor of her noble husband, who was an old conspirator, at present repentant and restored to the favor of the tyrants."

"There is a husband, then?"

"Oh, very little! He is rarely seen; it is even said that they detest one another, and live apart."

"In that case present me."

"Lovelace?"

"By no means."

They went over to the princess. "Monsieur de Gravenoire!" cried Mme. de Carpegna, on seeing the *attache* to the embassy—"You have become quite rare for some time."

Gravenoire excused himself in the press of business at the embassy.

"I am now at Passy," continued the young woman, "in my little house in Garden Street."

"You don't want a gardener, I suppose, princess?"

"No, nor a coachman either; but I receive my friends there with pleasure, who wish to make the pilgrimage."

"Madame," said Gravenoire, "allow me to present to you my friend, Viscount Marcel Besnard."

The faintest tint of red flashed across the pale face of the princess as she looked up at the young viscount.

"M. Marcel Besnard, of the family of the Count Brutus Besnard?" said the princess.

"My father, madame," said Marcel.

"Formerly Attorney General?"

"The same."

The violet eyes were fixed on him a moment, and then extending to him her hand she said:

"Friend of one of my friends, you are, from this moment out, my friend; sit down."

The old Baron de Chesnaye, a chamberlain-deputy, pretended to be ill-used by the favor shown to Marcel, and the princess laughed heartily.

"Will the princess deign to accord me the favor of a waltz?" said Marcel.

She rose at once.

"As a general thing," she said, "I don't care for the waltz, but I can't refuse the son of Count Brutus Besnard."

"Take care," said de Chesnaye, "he'll ask for something else."

"He is the right age for audacity, my dear de Chesnaye."

There was a general burst of applause.

She took the arm of the young man softly, and leaned on it, lazy and languid at the same time. With a slight and voluptuous pressure, she held it against her side. He became nervous, troubled and unable to say a word. He drew her across the floor, past many groups, fearing to break the charm that bound him.

"So, sir," she said a second time, "you are the son of Count Brutus Besnard, formerly the Attorney General."

"And to-day a Councilor of State; yes, princess. Did you know my father?"

"Oh! Not personally, but I know his name. It is one of the glories of imperial France. A name, viscount, that must be heavy to bear."

Marcel bowed solemnly, then putting his

arm round the waist of the lovely princess, he swept her with the movement of the dance. Trembling with excitement, she waltzed, pressed closely against him, her eyes closed, touching his cheek every now and again with her face, and wholly given up to the powerful arm he held around her.

They were compelled to stop suddenly, the music ceased abruptly. The leader of the orchestra struck three blows on his desk, and at once the band struck up the official hymn of "Queen Hortense." The Duke de Bassano, the Grand Chamberlain, appeared in the doorway of the Gallery of Fetes and announced:

"The Emperor."

"What's the matter?" asked the princess of her partner.

"The Emperor," replied Marcel. "He is making a tour of the hall, before retiring to his apartments."

With an effort **almost** brutal, the young woman tore aside the outstretched hands surrounding her. A surprising transformation took place in her; like a flash her languid, easy manner changed to feverish activity and energy, and the nerves almost danced in her face.

"The Emperor?" she exclaimed. "Quick, oh, quick! Monsieur, let us get up to him."

The dancers in the gallery had already formed in two lines, elbowing one another in the rudest way. The Princess de Carpegna was able to gain a front place in the crowd through the efforts of Marcel. The orchestra stopped, a murmur passed along the lines. The imperial cortege was advancing slowly.

At the head the officers of the Cent Gardes behind them the aides-de-camp, then the masters of ceremony, and last the Emperor.

Napoleon the Third wore the uniform of a general of division, and the grand cordon of the Legion d'honneur.

He was passing, when all of a sudden the Princess de Carpegna pushed forward her head to get a better view. Her fan fell out of her hand, and she gave a little cry. Napoleon stopped, took up the fan and handed it to her with a most gracious bow. Then, with a strange and unusual self-possession, she stepped forward and gave him her hand.

They gazed into one another's eyes, she blushed faintly and retired. The Emperor saluted her again and went on.

A few steps further on he recognized the

old chamberlain de Chesnaye and spoke a few words in his ear.

Half an hour later Napoleon the Third had returned to his apartments.

VII

SIMPLE EFFECT OF A DISTICH

"Your Emperor is charming," said the princess, with an access of girlishness and innocence. "He is gallant and polite. Ah! Louis the XIV has found his master. Napoleon is charming! charming!"

She had taken the arm of her escort again, and crossed the room, chatting and laughing with him all the way.

"What a magnificent ball, viscount! I have been to many of the official reunions in Italy, but, alas, our miserable festivals could not come up to the splendors of your court; our princes are so poor, so insignificant—beggars, veritable beggars; but this is a gorgeous display."

"Do you intend to remain in Paris, princess?"

"For some time, at least. I adore Paris."

"And the Parisians, princess?"

"And the Parisians? They are dangerous, very dangerous, too much to be feared by

poor women like me, isolated and without a champion."

She spoke in soft, sweet, caressing tones, at the same time resuming the gentle pressure on his arm. The figure undulated and she seemed rather to sail than walk as she almost imperceptibly leaned against his breast once more.

They got into the room where the standing supper was spread out. A rough and confused crowd was already there, pushing to and from the tables.

"What day do you receive, princess?" asked Marcel, whom the last words, "isolated and without a champion," had made thoughtful.

"Saturday, viscount, but you will be welcome any day—oh! if I could—"

She did not finish, but with a sharp, quick movement fell back. "Don't go on that side," she whispered. "Avoid that man, that one! He is so bad."

She pointed to a man on a sofa, talking with some others in an animated manner. He was an old man, dressed in an elegant court costume, sword and all.

"Who is this very wicked man?" asked Marcel, making light of the matter.

"That one I see on the sofa. That old papa bare-head who has not a hair left on his crown. He has a shining skull, though. I doubt if a fly could get a footing there. It must be more slippery than polished marble. I never saw a pate with such a finish on it. In a competition for baldness, our old friend de Chesnaye would have to own himself vanquished by that man."

He fixed his glass in his eye, and looked once more, with an almost impertinent persistence.

"You are afraid of him? What nonsense."

"He is very wicked," she said shivering, and in the frightened tone of a young girl. She seemed to be really alarmed.

Marcel made a detour to avoid the old man, but the latter had already risen, and, continuing his conversation, followed the secretary and the young woman step by step.

They were compelled to stop in a little while.

"I am very hungry," said the princess, suddenly assured, as she fancied they had escaped the old man.

"Let us try and get to the table."

Marcel managed to push his way to the table, not without trouble, and installing her

in front of it, placed himself behind her to protect her. A voice talking in the crowd behind him, caused him to raise his head and listen. "Who is the shadow of the beautiful Rose?"

"I have just heard his name. He is a certain Viscount Besnard."

"A relative of the State Councilor?"

"I believe so."

There was a short silence, and then the voice said in a high and mocking tone:

"The attorney Besnard, Brutus of the seaman's land,
Son of a hangman, became hangman of a band."

Marcel turned quickly and found himself face to face with the person who had frightened the princess, and examined him angrily from head to foot.

The old man returned the insolent look with interest, and measured the viscount with his eye.

"That is an abominable verse, sir," said the young man, "and it seems to me to need a lesson in poetry. I am the son of Count Brutus Besnard—will you wait a moment? I want to talk to you."

The old man laughed mockingly. "I am at your service, sir," he said; "not here, though.

I suppose you will find me by and by in the Apollo Hall."

During this colloquy the princess had not looked; she was giving up her entire time and attention to the consumption of the good things on the table.

Had she heard?

She turned to seek the arm of her escort soon after, and Marcel and she went back to her former place.

Her return was greeted with loud demonstrations of joy. La Chesnaye, Gravenoire and the others were waiting for her. They formed a circle round, and wit and laughter once more assumed the ascendancy.

Chamberlain La Chesnaye displaced two hairs that had escaped the mucilage holding the others to his temple, in bending down to whisper to the princess.

"I have something sweet to say to you."

"Well, say it."

"You manage the fan so gracefully."

"Is that all?"

"No."

"What else?"

"Ah! you take one's breath away."

"Do I?"

"Yes, indeed."

"Go and get a new pair of lungs."

"I wish I could."

"What did you want to say?"

"The Emperor is in love with you."

"Oh! you old story teller," hiding behind the fan.

"He is, indeed. He told me so."

"And you betray his confidence; that's dreadful."

"Well, I am your friend."

"And come to frighten me. I hardly think it."

"I am, indeed."

"What is that old suborner of innocence saying?" asked Gravenoire.

"Some amiable nonsense," replied the princess. And pointing to the golden key attached to the red gown of the chamberlain she added: "He wants to open all the doors in the palace for me. What a gusher!"

After leaving the princess with her friends, Marcel went to the Apollo Hall to keep his appointment with the old man. The Salon d'Apollon was a good distance from the Galerie des Fetes, and at that late hour pretty nearly deserted. The old man was waiting,

alone, carelessly lying on a sofa. Marcel pushed a chair near the sofa, sat down, and bending forward toward the man who had provoked him, said:

"I am the son of Count Brutus Besnard, and you insulted my father."

The other toyed with the lace on his jacket, then, calm, smiling, in a tone at once cold and dry, replied:

"Insulted your father, my dear sir? Alas! he is not of the kind that may be insulted."

Marcel tore the glove from his left hand.

"What do you mean?" he gasped.

"Besnard, the attorney of the South and swindler of sailors' saving institutions, ex-con-triver of mixed commissions, and manipulator of dark designs, has committed many cruel atrocities in his time."

Marcel bounded to his feet. "You lie!" he cried; "my father has always accomplished his duties worthily."

"Even in assassinating Lavetti," whom he was not content with stabbing once, but drove the steel through his breast a second time to make sure. He had previously corrupted that noble patriot's wife, and ruined his home. Your father is an infamous scoundrel."

Marcel struck the old man across the face with his glove. The old man rose to his full height and setting his teeth cried:

"I will kill you to-morrow."

"Your name?" cried Marcel.

"There is my card."

Marcel seized it, read it, and fell back in amazement. The words on the card were these:

"Prince de Carpegna."

Rose sat surrounded by her admirers in the *Gallerie des Fetes*.

Marcel went and joined them.

VIII

JACK'S SEARCH

Jack Burroughs was one of the happiest men in London the day after Rose's visit to the Temple. He ate a great breakfast, and went off to his avocations like a man meaning business.

He got business too, plenty of it, that day, and was as much surprised as if he had found a crock of gold. He set himself to it like a man in earnest, and by the time the dinner hour came, he had the satisfaction of seeing that he had accomplished a good day's work. He had a splendid appetite, and after a cigar, and a chat with some professional friends about future arrangements, walked home. He found a note from Rose on the table. It told him of her flight, and begged him not to try to find her out. It would only waste his time, and make her wretched, and do no good to any one. It told him she would always love him, and remember, but that she was very

unhappy, and hoped he would not make her more so. She could not help what had happened; it was fate, and they should both abide by it. Jack sat on the sofa a long time thinking, with the letter in his hand. Then he took a fit of reading it, and went over it half a dozen times. He seemed to get a notion from it that she was not far away, and might be easily discovered. After pondering the matter over a couple of hours he went out. He strolled down toward the Haymarket and Argyle Street, and tarried about that neighborhood, not well knowing what he was doing. He was an easy-going, even-tempered fellow, and not in the habit of getting excited. He felt sure he would run across Rose, and he continued to move about in the localities she would most likely frequent. He had no notion in the world that she had a new lover; his idea was that she had been persuaded by some Italian renegades to join them.

Her intelligence, appearance and absence of fear fitted her for such a part, and Jack had no doubt the cunning plotters had persuaded her to take some hand in a murderous scheme. He went to the restaurants and

cafes where such men, in slouch black hats and long beards, idled away the days and nights, but heard no news of her. He searched the theaters, thinking she might have gone on the stage; but he found no trace of her anywhere. He was not disappointed, disheartened or dispirited, only he grew more serious. After six months' search he was as keen for the hunt as the first day and his conviction that he would come up with her, was as strong as ever.

His business improved in the meantime and he worked hard. It brought him more into society too, and he was often at receptions, dinners, dances and parties. He belonged to a good West End family and was highly connected. If he had wished to cultivate that sort of thing he might have obtained a good practice through it, and a rich wife, but it was not in his line and he stole away from it. His nature was heavily streaked with Bohemianism, and he was at heart a radical.

One day he met a young French lady at a reception, and was presented to her by his mother. She was Gabrielle de Besnard, the daughter of the Count Brutus de Besnard and a great friend of Jack's sister.

She was exquisitely lovely. She had one of those fine aristocratic faces so rarely seen outside of the old Gallic nobility. She was very slight and delicate, though in good health, but like one of those fragile flowers that seemed almost too frail to resist the faintest zephyr. She had a low, sweet, clear voice, and was lame in the right foot, although she managed to carry herself so that it looked little more than a halt.

"I know you quite well," she said to Jack, "although this is the first time I have had the pleasure of seeing you."

"You are very polite to say so."

"It is the truth. Maude has been always telling me of her big brother Jack."

"I am a big brother, indeed."

"That is not a fault."

"Thank you. Even if it were it would be too late to remedy it now."

"Yes, really."

"Is this your first visit to London?"

"Ah, dear no. I have been here frequently with my father and my brother."

"Ah, you have a brother also."

"Yes, a middle-sized brother, who will be very glad to make your acquaintance."

"Is he here now?"

"No, in Paris. You come to Paris sometimes, do you not?"

"I have been there frequently, but I don't expect to go now for some time. My professional obligations keep me here."

"Oh, well, it would be a nice holiday for you. Paris is very gay now, and we shall try to show you all the sights—Maude is coming next week."

"I am afraid it would be impossible for me to get away next week, but I'll try and come next year."

"Oh! my boy, there is no year like the present year, and no time like the present," said Count Maurice Belvoir-de-Point D'appui, who just joined the group. "Paris was never so gay as at this moment."

"Thank you, count," said Gabrielle; "your help was needed. Induce him to come over, and I will sing your favorite song for you at Madame D'Arbloy's first reception."

"Mademoiselle, it is an inducement to conquer a savage land," returned the count, bowing low.

"Then I will leave him to you."

"I shall do my utmost, rest assured."

"Why, what is there extraordinary at this moment, count?"

"Everything, sir, everything! The emperor, the empress, the balls, the circus, the theaters, the opera, and the Princess de Carpegna—Ah! sir, there is something extraordinary indeed. The world has never before seen such a beauty. She has taken Paris by storm, and nothing but her violet eyes, her dazzling raven hair, her grace, her voice, her style are talked about."

Jack became so interested he could not see that his sister was endeavoring to coax him over to the corner where Gabrielle and she were sitting. He drew the count on, and at every word he became more and more convinced the Princess de Carpegna was no other than Rose.

At the conclusion of the count's enthusiastic harangue he said: "Count, I think I shall run over, and see what they are doing in the theaters."

The count laughed. "That was so like an Englishman. He was going to Paris to look at a woman, and he put it on the theaters—Puritan to the backbone—well, it was in them. What was the use? After all, they were not so bad."

Gabrielle was delighted to hear that she had persuaded Jack to accompany them across the channel, and so were Maude and her mother.

They started next day, but several days had passed before Jack was able to separate himself from the ladies and go in search of Rose.

He heard of her everywhere, but saw her nowhere. He almost began to believe she was a myth.

He was standing one day beside a tree in the Champs-Elysees watching the carriages as they bowled along toward the Bois, and was almost on the point of giving up the chase on that occasion, when he saw her in an open carriage with two gentlemen. As she passed him their eyes met, and she leaned back in the carriage fainting. She knew him in an instant. Gabrielle and Maude were directly behind her in a victoria and seeing Jack they stopped and took him in it. He drove in that way to the Bois, sometimes passing Rose as the stream of vehicles arrested her and sent him on, impeded him and gave her way, opening up opportunities to both to study and watch the other as they passed and repassed in full view. Rose was furiously

jealous. The hot Italian blood was dancing in her up to the roots of her hair. It was plain to any one, man or woman, that Gabrielle was in love with Jack. She treated him in a proprietary manner that exasperated Rose, and the cool way Jack accepted it all provoked her still more. It was evident that Maude was his sister. She was very like him, had the same indifference to surroundings, and looked as if nothing could surprise her into a betrayal of emotion. Jack dined with the Besnards that evening, and the following day went out to see after Rose. He got her address from a friend in one of the clubs, and called at her house. She was out but a note that she had left addressed to him was handed to him by the servant. It said: "To-night at ten at the Cafe de L'Etoile."

Rose had gone with a hunting party to the forest of Compiègne fearing to trust herself that day with Jack. During the afternoon she rode down her jealousy and anger, and was able to meet him at night with the old smile. As soon as they were alone in the *cafe* she said:

"Now, Jack, you have found me out, and I am a good girl, I have come to see you; not a

word about parting, or what has happened since, or recrimination, or off I go and that's the last of me. Let's have a good dinner like in the old time, and be the best friends we may."

Jack accepted that, seeing it was all he could obtain then, and Rose was as gay as ever. She sang for him and danced for him, and did all in her power to make him forget their separation. The dinner was a success. After that they drove to her house and Jack was amazed at the luxury he saw. She took him up to her little satin-lined boudoir, seated him on a sofa, and took a cushion at his feet.

"Now, Jack," she said, "I love you too well, and you love me too well, for me to allow you to carry away an unjust opinion of me in your mind. You have found me in extravagance and luxury, and going by a name that is not mine. It has not been given to me by a man. I did not leave you for a man who would support me in that style, and make me a fashionable woman. I am the center of a ring, the tool of a band something like what you used to say. I can't help it. Don't say a word. It is my fate, my destiny, I must obey. I am their instrument and they use me

at their will. They are doing my work as well as their own or I should not be with them. I need not go into the whole story that leads up to that, but I know if you heard it you would approve."

"I would not sanction revenge, Rose."

"Yes, you would in this case— but no matter. I don't want to draw you into it. I won't draw you into it. So that you and I meet now for the very last time. I am an instrument, and those using me watch every turn I make. The very air I breathe is heavy with the presence of these men—their eyes are always on me. Every movement of my day is entered in a big book at night, and at the end of the month they can tell me what I ate, drank, said and did, and how much nearer we have approached to the fulfillment of our task. I live like a woman tossing on the points of a sea of bayonets, and seeing no relief in all time. I do not wish you subjected to that torture, and you would be subjected to it the moment you appeared to visit me. They are probably watching you now, and wondering what brought you here. So you see you must not follow me up, but leave me for both our sakes. I saw you to-day with

Gabrielle de Besnard. You must leave her too. She loves you, but you are not yet in love with her—leave her, Jack. There is danger in her. Not in the poor child herself—she appears to be a sweet, harmless girl, although I was madly jealous of her when I saw her near you—but on account of others belonging to her. The trail of blood flows in her direction. Keep away, Jack, my gentle Jack; keep away, love. Won't you?"

"I'll see."

"Do for my sake. Leave me something to look back to with pleasure and love, something that was mine and is secure from the furnace that seized me."

"Why not fly, and leave it?"

"My sweet and simple giant, because I cannot, because I would not if I could, because it is stronger than I."

"Well, Rose, you are an enigma. I don't understand you."

"That's right. Don't try to. Let me go on my own way, and be as little unhappy as you can without me." She jumped to her feet and cried: "Do you remember the old cachuca, Jack? Here it is."

And she danced out of the apartment into

another. When she came back she wore only a satin scarf that she carried in her hand and flung about here and there as the poses of the dance required. She did the bolero, the paria, and sang the Saloma, waving the scarf with such grace and elegance that Jack was several times compelled to applaud. Then she wound it round her waist, and stood on a stool for a pedestal, and posed in imitation of the Venuses of several of the great masters. She sang until the sound of her voice was the only echo in Jack's mind and then went over to the cushion by the sofa and laid his head on her panting breast.

IX

FATHER AND SON

Nine o'clock had just struck, and a November morning lighted up with its snowy reflection the monastic habitation of the Count Besnard. The Councilor of State sat in his little library working and listening to his daughter. He was more morose than usual that day, and yet it was the anniversary of his birthday. It was a custom in the family to celebrate the occasion. Gabrielle was up at daylight, and presented to her father a basket of flowers. Then both sat down, and waited for the arrival of Marcel, but in vain. After waiting some time the young girl went down to his room and returned pale and frightened.

"Oh! father, dear, the room is empty; the bed has not been slept in; some misfortune has happened."

The old man shrugged his shoulders, and the pain that Marcel had been causing him

for some time past, broke out from his heart through his lips.

"These are the sons we bring up," he cried, bitterly. "Useless and vicious. A hundred times more criminal than the spendthrifts of the old nobility. They, at least, were filled with a sense of honor, and we—we trample it under foot. Oh, society agonized and condemned, whither are you driving? Let us go to church, child."

At the church of Saint Vallery the devout old man remained plunged in meditation longer than usual. Was he praying for his son, or his own past? He returned to the house, and father and daughter sat in the library looking sadly at one another. No word had been received from Marcel.

"I have a heavy heart this morning," said the count, after a long pause. "Give me a little music, child."

She had a heavy heart, too, and the tears stood in her eyes as she went to the piano. She sang an old peasant song, a great favorite of the count, and called, "The Complaint of the Wheel."

Seated in a large chair, the count listened in silence, his eyes closed, his hands folded

before him. Now and then when a passionate note rose more sonorously and powerfully he looked up and thought, "Her mother's voice; oh, God, shall hers be the same fate?"

"That's enough, my baby," said the old man, waking from his dream. "You are pale this morning. Are you suffering?"

"A little, father; less than usual on account of the day."

"It is very dull for you here; I wish you would go out more."

"Oh! I go out enough, dear father."

"You ought to have gone to the ball at the Tuileries with your brother last night."

"Ah! cruel father, you want to show to the world that your little girl is lame."

He took her in his arms, exclaiming, "Pardon! I never thought of it; I never do."

At that moment Marcel walked into the room. He had returned to the house a little while before, changed the uniform he had worn at the ball for his evening dress, and was dressed, gloved and all ready to go out again. He held his hat in his hand. Count Besnard glanced at his son, and in that glance was a world of iron anger. He seated himself without saying a word. Marcel went up to him with long strides and said:

"My dear father, will you excuse my absence this morning? I assure you I could not return to the house until this moment. I know I ought not to be absent on such a day, but I am going to fight a duel."

The old man bounded on his chair, Gabrielle fainted. Marcel raised her while the count rang for her maid, and when she was removed from the room the count said:

"A duel, sir? I compliment you; and what is the motive of this duel?"

"A defense of my honor and yours, my dear father."

"My honor?" and the old man rose to his full height. "Who then has dared to attack my honor?"

"A man in the open court last night; an insolent scoundrel dared to call your family 'a race of hangmen,' insulting thus our ancestors, you, my father, us all, in fact. The attack was public, the reply the same. I struck him in the face."

"And you are going to kill him," cried Gabrielle appearing in the doorway robed in white. "Go!"

Count Besnard contemplated his son with love and pride. He was very pale, but the

old fire flashed dangerously in his eye. He put his hand out, and grasped that of the young man.

"You did well, my son," he said. "The preservation of honor is one of the obligations imposed by God. In such a case a duel is sanctioned, it is a holy work. It is the safeguard of families, and is right although against the law. What is the name of the man?"

"Prince de Carpegna."

"An Italian; ah! I understand. What age is he?"

The son was observing his father; the expression of his face alarmed him. He thought he heard a heavy anger groaning in the old man's heart, and perhaps a secret desire to demand reparation on his own account might spring from it. He thought it his duty to tell a pious lie.

"What age? He is about my age. It was a simple quarrel of young men."

"You are deceiving me. What are the conditions of this duel?"

"Amusing! It is nothing more than a pleasure party. We exchange balls at twenty-five feet and hurry home to breakfast."

"You handle the pistol well, I know. Who have you for seconds?"

"Gravenoire and the Baron La Chesnaye."

"I would have preferred other men. Where are you going to meet?"

"At Vancressor, in Gravenoire's Park."

"Very good! I will go with you."

The young man put out his hand as if to stop his father from moving.

"No, I beg of you not to do that. It would make me look ridiculous."

"Ridiculous, eh?" The count was seized with a rush of blood to the head, and fell back in the chair heavily. He was quiet for a few minutes, and then with an effort once more extended his hand to Marcel.

"That was a cruel word, my son," he said softly, "but let it be. Go, I will remain here, and await the result. I do not wish to render you ridiculous."

"I am going to fight, father," said Marcel at length, seeing that the old count was again fully restored, "and to chastise a scoundrel. I would like to ask you a question."

"A question, my son; go on. I am listening."

The young man looked fixedly at his father, for whom he was going to kill, or be killed, and in a voice trembling with emotion said:

"What crime did the Italian Lavetti commit?"

The count bounded to his feet, and then sank back into the chair in a heap.

"Lavetti! ah, it is Lavetti who has come up—Lavetti! Well, what do you wish to know? That miserable story is only too well known."

"I know nothing of it. It was mentioned in my presence for the first time last night, but now I want to be put in full possession of the facts. It is time that calumnies should be put down, and the truth made known. I want to know how that unfortunate man came to sacrifice his life."

The count did not reply at once. He passed his hand over his eyes and forehead, as if he were endeavoring to gather the floating details of the occurrence, and, finally, said: "The day following the proclamation of the amnesty in December the demagogues took the field—bands of insurgents, veritable brigands, organized to sweep the country. They went into the villages, robbed houses and burned churches. They were a lawless rabble. At that time I was Attorney General, and I was assigned to preside in a mixed com-

mission. Orders from Paris enjoined me to suppress the revolt, and my duty forbid me to be weak. Among the insurgents were many foolish enthusiasts. I was merciful to them; but many others were criminals, and fomenters of anarchy. I was implacable with them. There were many Italians among these cut-throats, self styled apostles of the universal Republic, and the chief of one band was a certain Scipione Lavetti, a noted desperado. He had campaigned in his own country, was a refugee, a Mazzinian, and had been proclaimed in France. He was a man without a country, more dangerous on account of education and former position than any other. A man who traveled from land to land in time of trouble, and made assassination the business of his life. Like his associates, he dreamed of the dishonor, the destruction, of France; Christian and monarchial France, I mean, the France of our ancestors. He was found on a barricade, and with his own hand had struck down the soldiers. The officer who commanded the assault made him a prisoner, and although he was severely wounded he survived."

The count stopped, unable to proceed.

"Then they stabbed him twice."

"Yes, twice!" gasped the ex-Attorney General, "because he had killed two men. He dared to boast of it in my presence, saying he regretted that I was not one of them, for it was for me he came into the country; and I took the law into my own strong hands."

"Oh."

"Ah! I know; I know. These are different times. We live in peace, but that was the time we secured it, and we could only have done so by energetic measures. Peace, order, the preservation of the country at any price was the temper of the moment, and nothing less would have saved us. I fear no idle tongues. I did my duty. My country endorsed the deed, and God and my conscience approve it."

Marcel held down his head.

"I know what they have said. Two soldiers! What are two soldiers? The humble life of the soldier is of no value. It bears no comparison to the existence of a citizen; but they were robbing and murdering citizens too—all who opposed them. A whole army was destroyed by the uprising in June, and when we sent another to take its place we

were called hangmen. It was repeated in your hearing last night, and is the cause of your duel to-day. Touch one of these gentlemen in the clubs, and you'll hear them cry out 'Abomination!' and 'Martyrs!' A whole regiment was riddled in the Boulevard Bonne Nouvelle by the guns of the insurgents, and when they dared to defend themselves the cry went up, 'What infamy!' These are not my ethics, and my conscience is not that of an inventor of libels. Scipione Lavetti killed two men; he was killed. He wanted to destroy France, France destroyed him."

"Stabbed twice," murmured Marcel, without looking up.

"I could, like many others," continued the count, "have played the comedy of Pontius Pilate, and washed my hands of the business, saying, the counsel of war has condemned him, let it be responsible. I did not want to. I ardently solicited his sentence, I insisted on his execution. It was I, really I, who executed justice. Ah! they know that well, the brothers, the friends, the companions, the members of the secret societies. Their hatred has pursued me since that day. He was one of their leading men. A prince and

a scoundrel, ready for anything. They have insulted me, maligned me, scandalized my name, and are at it now again. They are implacable. What do I care for their puny pursuit, their echoes of the slums? Every hour for the last five years, I have given myself up to God, and God has never replied: 'There's blood crying out against you!' The sin of my life is not that—cannot be that—I do not regret it."

Father and son looked on the ground.

The old man had made an eloquent defense, but felt that the son was not satisfied. He stretched out his arm, took down a crucifix from the wall and handing it to Marcel said: "Swear on that crucifix that you have lied to me. Your duel is a duel to the death—I feel it. I know it. Before night, perhaps—he who bears my name, who is wrapped up in my love, my child, the last of his race, will be brought home dead to me for the defense of his father's honor. Look! there is my master," pointing to a large picture of Christ over the mantel. "Look! on the cross I extend my hand, and repeat, I did my duty. I regret nothing."

Silence succeeded. Marcel then slowly ap-

proached his father, took his hand, bent on one knee and kissed it.

"Pardon me, father; I doubted like the others, but I believe now."

The old man took his son in his arms, and held him there a long time. Then suddenly releasing him, he said:

"Go, my son, do your duty toward me, your own name, and the world. Be faithful as I was to my country and in the day of trial God will be by your side."

The young man started for the door but stopped half way in the middle of the room and said: "He has judged us all, father, for I shall come back. I bid you a short farewell. And you, my darling sister."

Gabrielle kissed him passionately on the forehead, and motioned him to go.

"If he dies, I shall follow him," said the old man to himself when Marcel had left the room. "They will pursue him to the end and never let him live. This was premeditated, prepared. My boy! my boy!" He trembled from head to foot, and could scarcely keep in his chair. He was seized with chills, and a cold sweat broke out on his temples. Gabrielle rang for the servants and they brought hot

drinks and towels, but the old man went from one fit into another. Everything in the room seemed to swim before him and he murmured: "Lavetti! ah! Lavetti!" while his head dropped heavily. Finally he became unconscious and they sent for the doctor.

X

SEEING THE TOWN

Jack met the ladies at breakfast in the Hotel Meurice the next morning, and proposed a day's tramping through the city. They were delighted, and started almost immediately. They called for Gabrielle and one or two other young people, and Jack added some friends from the club. It was quite a large party before it got under way, and Maude Burroughs managed so that Jack had charge of Gabrielle. She was in ecstasy; she was very much in love with the big Englishman and was so excited at her good luck in being under his charge that she laughed and talked all day. Jack had no notion of the situation, and handled the girl as if she were a wax figure. They went about from point to point, beginning with Notre Dame and ending up at Versailles where they dined. Jack was in capital humor, and Maude placed it to the account of Gabrielle. She said so

to her, on the way home, and the poor frail cripple replied:

"No, dear, you are wrong. He thinks no more of me than a bird in the forest he has heard sing and admired. I am nothing to him. Don't try to persuade me. I love him with all my heart, and I shall never love any one else on earth. He is very bright to-day, but it is not on our account. I have watched him, his mind is somewhere else. It may be business; I think it is love. I wish him success in every one of his undertakings, even that."

Jack and his friends left the ladies at their homes, and started out to stretch their legs along the boulevards. Jack managed to escape in a little while and drove to the house in which he had seen Rose the previous night. It was all dark, but he knocked. While he was ringing the bell a black looking figure passed, and scowled at him. Jack smiled. He thought to himself, "That fellow is some private policeman, and is trying to play detective." Presently another came by, and then a third, and Jack said to himself: "Hello! the whole band is out for an airing. I wonder what's up." A man came along the garden of the adjoining house just then, and seeing Jack knocking for admission said to him:

"The people who lived there moved out to-day."

"Thank you," replied Jack.

"I saw them take away the furniture."

"Thanks," said Jack again, and he moved off.

When he was about half way up the street a man stepped out of a dark passage-way and addressing him, said:

"You had better get back to the Temple; this is no place for you."

"You had better mind your own business," said Jack, trying to distinguish the man's face.

"I am minding my own business, and yours too, in giving you a friendly warning."

"You ought to wait until you are asked for it."

"It might be too late."

"It's too early now."

"Time will show. What you are after is not for you, and you will not be allowed to interfere with the work of others."

"That's a threat."

"As you like."

"I'd like to get a grip on your throat."

"Some one will get a grip on your throat if you are not careful."

Jack made a dash for the fellow, but he disappeared in the night.

"Phew," said the big fellow, "if they think to frighten me by such tricks as that they are mistaken. The cowardly hounds, that's like them, working in the dark. They are quite capable, however, of running a stiletto into me. I must buy a pistol. I wonder where Rose went off to. She said she was going, but I did not believe her. I'll find her, and then I'll make sure of her."

He went home, rolled into bed and slept soundly until the next morning.

He did not find Rose the next day. There was not a sign of her in her usual resorts. She had disappeared again as completely as when she left Jack in the Temple. He was not down-hearted, although he was disappointed, but he went on with his search doggedly, and with the perseverance of his kind.

XI

GABRIELLE

Dismissed by her father, pale and trembling, Gabrielle sought her own room. It was a charming apartment, white and blue. The count had selected the furniture. It looked as if it had been made for the use of a fairy. The bed was a marvel of lightness and grace, and the mirror and prie-dieu and toilet table had been fitted up by a hand that revered everything about them. The little library with its pious books, and the religious pictures, the crucifix, and the beads were all put there by the father who adored his lame child. Gabrielle entered and turned her eyes away from the God of Mercies and the Mother of Griefs. She sat down near the window, at her little writing desk, and remained some time in thought. Then taking a sheet of paper, she wrote:

“To my father.—If Marcel is killed to-day I will not survive him. I wish to die. I im-

plore the clemency of Jesus, and that of the Holy Virgin, on my knees, and ask your pardon, father. Knowing that I am an object of laughter and repulsion to others I have suffered a great deal and wish to be at peace. I leave my fortune to John Wellington Burroughs of London. He may make what use he pleases of it." She closed the letter and laid it on her desk then went over to the prie-dieu and prayed aloud to God to give her strength for the task she had determined upon. She said she loved Jack Burroughs and could not live without him. He was indifferent to her and did not even suspect that she adored him. She next implored the Holy Virgin to change his heart and to give her courage to die. She thought her brother would not come home, and if he did not she would make that the pretext for poisoning herself.

"Oh!" she cried, "if he would only take me up in his great strong arms and let me die there like a butterfly, I would be happy forever more. He loves another and my life is ended here. I have no place on earth, no home."

Just then a knock came to the door, and a

servant announced that her father was dangerously ill.

She flew down to his room.

XII

TWO PISTOL SHOTS

Along the high, wide causeway which, brushing Ganche and Vancresson, turns toward Saint Germain, the landau of Marcel drove rapidly. It was a bright, cold day, and snow was falling. The gentlemen in the carriage appeared to be in very good humor. La Chesnaye and Gravenoire smoked and chatted as placidly as if they were going to some supper at the Maison-d'Or. Marcel Besnard was a little more reserved, even taciturn. He was leaning back in the caleche, beside the gay old chamberlain. In front of them sat Gravenoire and the doctor. The pistols were in a box on the knees of Gravenoire.

"Ah! my friend," said the baron to Marcel, "what a sad pleasure party a duel is. You are going to play the first part. Happy young man! How I would like to be in your place. Tell me, Gravenoire, are you satisfied with these pistols?"

He opened the box, as he spoke, and took the weapons out.

"Duelling pistols, according to agreement. I selected them carefully. They are hard on the trigger, so there is nothing to fear."

"So much the worse," said Marcel. "I wish to give a lesson to-day that will serve for all time."

"We have prepared a little note of explanation for the papers," said Gravenoire.

"What sort of persons are the seconds on the other side?" asked Marcel.

"Italians," replied La Chesnaye. "One is called Count Cannassa, the other Signor Traventi."

"Ah! *per Bacco!* what a sample he is," exclaimed Gravenoire. "Imagine, this morning, when we met them, I thought I recognized an old acquaintance, an Italian who served in the Foreign Legion, where I commanded a battalion. He was called Marino, and was a wolf if one ever got into the shape of a man. He hunted the Arabs so well that he was made a non-commissioned officer, but one day he deserted and joined Mazzini at Rome. My foxy young man frequented at that time a young person—hum—of the tribe of Bene

—Mouffetard, a singer at the Prado de Oran. She called herself Steelheart—pretty name, is it not? And there is so much in a name for a singer. She was a superb woman, and had a glorious voice.”

“Ah!” said the baron, putting his head out of the window, “we are late; the others are waiting for us. This is the spot.”

“You are right,” said Gravenoire, “this is the place, and they are on the ground before us. But that is of little consequence. It is the leaving this spot that will be interesting. There is a hired coach in front of the little hotel, and two men are walking up and down impatiently. We shall be there in a minute, gentlemen. There are no doubt the seconds of our adversary. I will go and furnish them with my indications, and all they will have to do will be to follow us.”

He jumped out of the carriage and went over to the two men.

“Say! say! say! Hello! Gravenoire!” cried out La Chesnaye, still hanging out of the carriage window. “Thunder and lightning! what a pretty coupe! Thoroughbred horse! new livery! And the blinds down. What does that all mean? I suspect, a lady.”

Gravenoire was already too far away to hear a word, but it was not many minutes before he returned.

"Who owns that coupe?" asked the curious old chamberlain. "You live down here, you ought to know."

"No, I don't really," said Gravenoire; "but come, let us get along!"

"Here we are in my place at last," said Gravenoire, ordering the coachman to pull up.

All got out, and at the same moment the other carriage drove up.

Escorted by his seconds, the Prince de Carpegna got out of his carriage. He was also attended by a physician. The ordinary politenesses of such occasions were passed, then, guided by Gravenoire, the whole party went into a corner of the park. Presently the sun came out, cold, clear, and bright. Marcel had piously lied to his father. The meeting was a serious one, and the duel was bound to be one of the most dangerous. The Prince de Carpegna, struck in public, had himself laid down the conditions. The adversaries were to be placed twenty yards apart and then take five steps in advance and given one minute to sight and fire; one or other, both, perhaps, must fall.

La Chesnaye was selected by common accord to direct the combat. It was a delicate mission, because it was difficult to walk comfortably among the slippery fallen leaves. But the baron was an old hand, and used to the ways of the field of honor. He counted twenty yards, marked the spot where the combatants ought to stand at the outset of the action, and then with his cane traced the line beyond which neither should step. Fate favored Marcel Besnard in the choice of weapons. These preparations terminated, each man was placed at his post, and the seconds ranged themselves on either side.

"Go, gentlemen," called out La Chesnaye.

Marcel advanced, stretched out his arm, and fired.

Touched. The Prince de Carpegna, struck in the breast, staggered. The next moment he stood erect. Slowly, dragging his feet after him, he walked to the line, lowered his pistol, and aimed at Marcel.

The latter crossed his arms and waited.

"Fire! Fire!" cried Gravenoire, as the old man hesitated.

"Fire!" cried the Baron La Chesnaye furiously.

The Prince de Carpegna was about to pull the trigger, but a slight noise in the hedge caused him to turn his eyes. He looked steadily a moment, and then broke out into a fit of strange laughter. Raising his arm he fired in the air. The next instant he fainted, and fell to the ground. The seconds rushed to his assistance, and the doctors examined the wound. The prince had a rib broken and was losing a good deal of blood.

"Take him into my cottage," said Gravenoire. "I have had a room prepared."

"Useless, my dear sir," replied Traventi. "If his excellency could speak, he would refuse."

"But he cannot ride to Paris in that condition. It would kill him."

The Italian doctor appeared much perplexed, and wanted them to accept the offer of Gravenoire, but the seconds would not listen to him.

"It is a dangerous wound," he said. "A very dangerous wound—bad, very bad!"

"Never mind," said Traventi, "let us get away."

The other second had already gone in search of the carriage. The surgeons stopped the

bleeding—not without trouble—and then the wounded man was carried out of the little park. He was lifted into the carriage and driven off. Standing in the middle of the road the friends of Marcel looked after the carriage as it disappeared in the dust.

“Gentlemen,” said the doctor, “by the time they arrive in Paris they will bear a corpse.”

XIII

ROSE

Amazed and thoughtful, Marcel remained a little in the background. Gravenoire approached him and said:

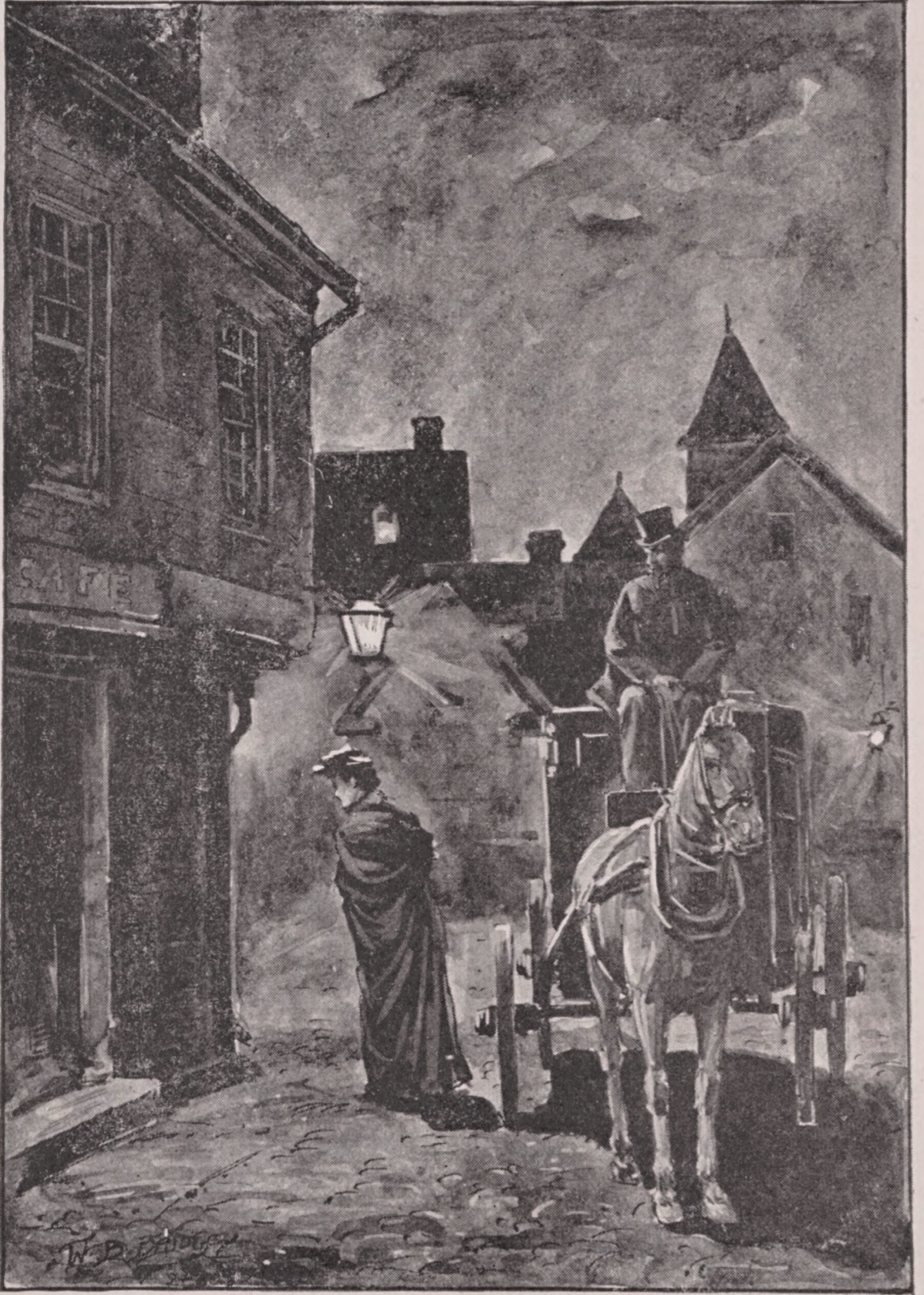
"A very pretty shot, my friend—capital, bravo! But what a strange duel! It reminds me of a famous fantasy of a Russian writer. You remember Pouch Kine's shot."

"Yes, I know," said Marcel, who little by little was returning to himself; "the combat in which the insulted man submitted to the fire of his adversary, and kept his reply for a better occasion—we shall see."

"Gentlemen," cried La Chesnaye, lighting his fifteenth cigar, "a motion. Here is the night, and we are hungry; suppose we go and celebrate the victor in a little supper at the Maison-d'Or!"

"I cannot go with you," said Marcel. "I must first see my father and embrace him."

They left the park, and got into their car-



HE PULLED UP IN FRONT OF A CAFÉ.

riage. A moment later they were rolling along to Paris. They had hardly disappeared when a woman pushed her way cautiously through the bushes. She crept to the middle of the road, and watched the laudau bury itself in the night, and in a high voice, and gesticulating like a comedienne, she cried:

"Awkward old fool, to allow himself to be killed! A veritable suicide! Bungler! Well, he is gone, and now it shall be a duel between you and me, Brutus Besnard. From this day out we are in the field, and it is a fight to the death, white mouth!"

Her coupe was waiting at a turn of the road, she entered it, and was driven to Paris. She put her head out of the window and told the coachman to drive to Passy. Ten minutes later she bade him stop. He pulled up in front of a *cafe*, a low, insignificant cabaret of the outskirts. The woman went in, asked for a pen and ink, then, in the musty smell of the mud, under the foul smoke of dirty pipes, traced some lines on a visiting card:

"To Monsieur the Viscount Marcel de Besnard:

"I was there—I saw all, and without waiting any longer, on the road even of the com-

bat, I take the liberty of writing to you. You have chastised an insolent man, and avenged your father. One ought always to avenge his father. If Garden Street at Passy does not seem to you the end of the world, come and see me. I am waiting. ROSE.

"Born Countess d' A Prata,—free at last."

XIV

LOVERS AT LAST

Marcel rushed up the stairs into his father's room, and found it darkened, and a doctor in attendance. Gabrielle threw her arms around his neck and fainted. She was restored, and embracing him again and again, became at length hysterical, and had to be removed to her own apartments. Marcel stepped softly to the bedside of his father. Presently the old man opened his eyes, and looked steadily at him. "I was dreaming that I saw him, was looking at him, saw him smile, but it is no dream; it is reality."

"My boy! My boy!" he broke forth, rising on the bed, and throwing his arms around his son's neck. The doctor tried to get him to keep quiet and lie down again, but the old count insisted he was well and needed no more treatment. Marcel took a chair and sat down beside him. There he recounted all that had occurred, omitting no detail, and the

old man's face glowed with pride and satisfaction. He was not over-pleased with the termination of the affair, and could not understand why the prince had fired in the air. He had strength enough and plenty of time to fire at his opponent, according to Marcel's account. Why did he wait, lose such an opportunity, and fire in the air? The old count thought it over and over and could not make it out.

"I wish I had been there," he said finally, "I wish I had been there."

"All the details were most satisfactorily arranged," said Marcel.

"They were all Italians on the other side?"

"Yes."

"Well, the main thing is that you defended our honor, and are here, but I don't like the end. That strange laugh, that shot in the air. When his man was in front of him with folded arms. There was some trick in it. The end is not yet. You will be careful, the fight is only deferred."

"I will, indeed."

"There was some one present you did not see, and he did. That caused the sudden change in the programme. When he advanced

he meant to kill but he changed his mind in obedience to a superior will or power. But he is dead. We have no more to do with him. Now that you are here I am well again. Go into your sister's room and talk to her. We shall have a good dinner to-day."

The old man was as good as his word, and after dinner Marcel strolled out to the club, to show himself. The duel was already the talk of the town. He was handed a note about ten o'clock and at once set out for the Hermitage at Passy. He was received with open arms. The Hermitage was a charming dwelling, elegant, and almost too sumptuous. It was surrounded by a well kept garden, and within had the flavor of a candy-box, exhaling even something of the odor of the kept woman. But bah! Italian women are passionately fond of the clinking of gewgaws. This one appeared so candid—a truly honest woman, Marcel thought, because he had received certain confidences. The princess had related her history to him at the very first interview. It was to the effect that when she was quite young, almost an infant, her parents married her through vainglory to a queer old man of

loose habits. He was a wicked fool, a former member of the Carbonari, a drinker of blood, a ferocious beast. "I could also," she said, with tears in her eyes, "I could, like so many others, have taken up a fad, chosen a lover, but the Holy Virgin and, above all, the pious memory of my sainted mother preserved me from a fall. I never knew love. I have never known it till now. Where could I? How could I? Why should I? I am free to-night, free from all the bonds that bound me, and I am in love."

The next day Marcel returned to Garden Street. And the next, and the next, and Rose kept falling deeper and deeper in love. So did Marcel.

To hide her from the world, and have her all to himself, he took her to his chateau at Cary de Valmont. It was no sooner known in the vicinity that he was there with a woman and an Italian than the gossips went to work, and he soon lost his good name. It was not long before they knew that he had inherited the widow of the man he had killed in a duel and the whole country round was shocked. The Count Raoul Dersirie Roche-albert broke off the marriage arranged between

Count Besnard and himself for his daughter and Marcel, so that the scandal was not long in reaching the paternal mansion in Paris.

Marcel cared nothing for it all, he hardly heard of it, he was living like a dove in a cote with his cooing companion and was happy, now he had her in his home, the beautiful Rose. He had her all to himself, in the solitude of his chateau. He was in love, madly in love, in heart, and soul.

But she!—Sometimes he found her sad, strangely sad, taciturn, and hopeless.

“I love you,” she used to say to him, “and I have a horror of myself, a scorn.”

It was no doubt a feeling of lessening in her own esteem. She was suffering in her finer nature the results of her fall. It came from remorse, maybe also from religious scruples.

Marcel resolved that they should be married at once, without even speaking to her on the subject. It was necessary to silence the calumny, at all events.

For that matter calumny had wasted its time. Its little clamor gave small trouble to the disdainful and indifferent master of Lasseville. He was living in the most absolute solitude, renouncing pleasure parties,

shortening his days, prolonging his nights, and all for his beloved. But she did not imitate that reserve—was less discreet, less modest even, and abandoned herself without constraint to the fury of her passion. She was thoroughly Italian; besides, intelligent, instructed, and very superstitious. She gave proof of it every instant; she had a purpose too in hand, and was getting restive over its accomplishment. Every now and again hints were sent to her that she was wasting time, and would soon be needed in another place. All that made her impatient, and at times ill-tempered.

Thoughts of Jack would come into her mind, and at such times she would rush out into the woods alone. She would clinch her fists, and beat the air, and shake the branches violently, as if to make them pay for her neglect of him. She knew he was prowling about Paris, looking for her, and she sent word to those with whom she was in league, that if a hair of his head were touched, she would balk them all. They knew she was capable of keeping her word, and Jack traveled around night and day unmolested.

One evening, under the shade of the lamp,

Marcel and Rose, pressed one against the other, were translating Alighieri, and reading the adventure of Francesca in the Inferno—exchanging kisses at every line; they came to these memorable verses, the most beautiful, perhaps, of the divine poet:

“Love which does not grant the gift of loving to any creature loved, would intoxicate me so quickly with the happiness of my lover, that—”

Rose tore the book suddenly from Marcel's hands and flung it away. Marcel looked at her stupefied.

“Dante is right,” she said, “love is an accursed contagion;” adding in a lower voice, “ah, my love, you must not read the last lines.”

He took up the book, and read the last lines.

They said—“Love has conducted us both to the same death.”

XV

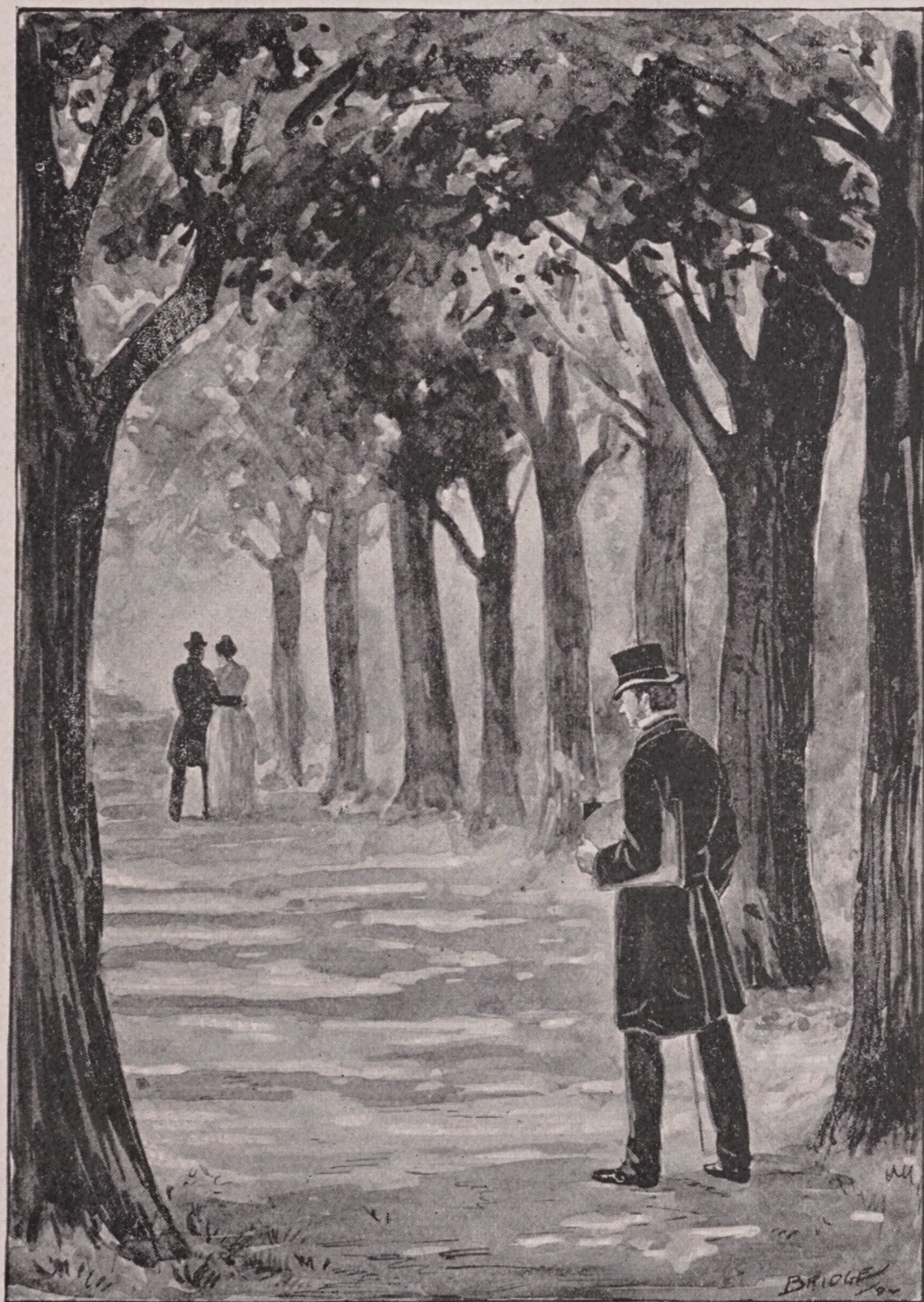
A COMPACT OF LOVE

M. Oscar Varin Court, the little notary of Lasseville, brought a slight interruption to the serenity of the chateau on the third of September. He arrived there about five o'clock in the evening, passed the house and went along the Park. At the extremity of a long alley of tall trees he perceived Marcel and Madame de Carpegna, going along in a very loving fashion. On hearing him approach, Marcel turned, and could not repress a gesture of ill-humor.

"Ah! It's you, M. Varin Court! What happy thought brings you here?" But in his heart he wished the notary at the bottom of the sea.

"Excuse my importunity, viscount," said the notary solemnly, "I have an important communication to make to you; a letter to read to you from the councilor of state himself."

"From my father," cried Marcel in aston-



AT THE EXTREMITY OF A LONG ALLEY OF TALL TREES HE PERCEIVED
MARCEL AND MADAME DE CARPEGNA.

ishment. "Be seated, I will listen to you."

Not far from where they stood was a rustic bench on which the three sat down. Oscar Varin Court spread upon his knees a napkin full of papers, and composing his face into the right expression said:

"Have you not recently written to the Count Brutus Besnard?"

"Yes, quite recently, to inform him of my intention to marry Madame La Princess de Carpegna."

"Marcel, that was ink thrown away," said the princess, laughing.

"The councilor of state," said the notary, "has deigned to address me a letter, and I bring you his reply."

"His reply! sent to you, and not to me?"

"I am sorry, viscount, but here it is."

Varin Court held out the letter. Marcel took it and read it aloud. Rose rested her head on his shoulder, her eyes half closed and heavy with languor, and listened smiling. The letter was hard and dry, and said:

"Monsieur, one of the clients of your office, M. Marcel Besnard, has just advised me of his project of marriage. I have already often made known to this young man the pain he

has caused me by his conduct. But as neither prayers nor reprimands have availed to put an end to an abominable scandal I have broken off all relations with my son. I pray you then to become my interpreter, and carry him my reply. That reply is this: In the old time, a gallant man would have had a scruple about marrying the widow of a man who had insulted his family, been chastised after, and by him killed in a duel. The injury, the insult—like the bloodshed—would have dug an impassable abyss between his passion and his honor. It appears we are in different days, and there is a new code of morals. For myself I hold to the old one. If then the conscience of M. Marcel no longer knows how to make itself heard, it becomes the duty of his father to speak, clearly and firmly. Not wishing to become the accomplice of a villainy, I refuse—once for all—my consent. Your client is now at liberty to do without it. In that case I shall demand the regular process at law, and will not be denied it. I wish it, I insist on it.

“For the rest you may say to my son that he will not have a long time to wait. I am ill and he knows I am ill.

“Yours very truly,

BESNARD.”

Marcel was quiet and nervous. He tossed the gravel on the walk around with his cane.

"Well, what have you resolved on?" asked M. Varin Court. "He is certainly very precise.

"The refusal of the paternal consent sets you at liberty to invoke article 152 of the Code Napoleon. Will you bring suit to compel him, and make him give his reasons, or get an order from the court to do without his consent for insufficiency of cause? I know a lawyer in Paris who will handle the matter skillfully and quietly. I will write to him. In the meantime it will be necessary for Madame La Princess, born Demoiselle d'A Prata, to communicate with her notary in Italy. I shall need certain papers, certificates of her parents' marriage, her birth, and so forth."

"Oh, my, what a lot of business," broke in Rose. "I would rather take poison like Juliet at once, and be united to Romeo. I don't wish any of that nonsense; none of it; no! no! no! I prefer to wait."

She pronounced the word "wait" in a tone of such stinging hate that the son of the Count Besnard became pale.

"I'll think this matter over," he said, "and

will let you know in a little while. Come back one of these days, my dear M. Varin Court."

The judicious Varin Court took back the catalogue, put it in an envelope, and the envelope in a bundle. Then he rose and made two low bows. A moment later, the small shadow of the man disappeared in the turn of the alley.

The lovers were alone.

"How foolish that was of you, Marcel," said the princess, impetuously; "what's the good of being married?"

"It is necessary, my dear Rose; our position has become very delicate."

"Oh! the common people, with their scruples; what do we care for them! Would you love me better if you were married to me?"

"No, certainly not. But I would love you then in my heart forever."

She looked at him fixedly a moment and said: "Forever! I know a tie stronger than marriage—it is death; when a person loved—mistress or lover—deceives the other, the latter should kill him, and then kill himself."

A long silence followed and accentuated this profession of passionate faith.

"So be it!" said Marcel at last. "It is a compact, I accept it." They continued their promenade, which had been interrupted by the notary, and were soon gay and laughing.

XVI

THE WILD ROSE

Day was declining as they returned to the castle—an autumn day, a lingering reminder of summer. They walked slowly and dreamily. He had his arm around her waist, and she leaned her head on his shoulder. They stopped on coming to the border of the tableland, and gradually waking, as if from a dream, looked all around. Before them spread out the valley of the Dalles. Rose gently disengaged herself from her lover's embrace, and stood in mute admiration of the beautiful scene before her.

"Oh! what a lovely autumn night," she cried, with enthusiasm, "and what a beautiful country is your France!"

"Why 'your France,' Rose?" demanded her companion; "shall it not be henceforth yours—shall it not be 'our France?' It cannot be my country, unless it is also yours."

She shook her head. "I know, I know.

'Thy God shall be my God, thy people, my people'. No, I shall remain myself. Ah!" she continued with vehemence, "a splendid country is your France! And yet she calls forth the bitterest hate. Once, the mistress of nations; to-day—

"That's a verse from Dante," said Marcel, "but he spoke of your Italy."

"My Italy! She is also miserable. A convict riveted to his chains. But the Italy—the land that we have dreamed about—at least knows how to curse, and can always weep."

"Rose," broke in the young man, wishing to cut short the painful dialogue, rather than wound what was loyal and patriotic, "tell me of yourself, of your family, of your hills, of your valleys. Recite for me again that sonnet of your favorite author, Leopardi."

"No!" she answered, "not that one, another."

"Very good, whichever you prefer."

She took some steps backward, and composing her face until it resembled that of the great Rachel, about to enter on the scene, remained in deep study for a moment. She then rose to her full height, and moved forward in a theatrical manner, redolent of fire and maj-

esty. Her drapery seemed to hang loosely about her, and form a sort of background to her pale, flexible features, her hair was disheveled, the arms stretched out and moving gracefully through the air, every now and again Lavetti declaimed one of the bitterest poems ever written against France.

Marcel, the son of the Count Besnard, stood listening to her, fascinated, spell-bound, his soul in arms, his heart weeping, love for the mistress of his being overpowering his reason, and in a sort of delirium at the burning words that seemed to fall like liquid fire from her lips; he felt as if drawn into perdition by the loss of honor, home, country, family, and all that man respects. When she had finished, and he could breathe once more, he cried out indignantly:

"What abominable invective, and what fierce and burning hate! Who wrote those verses?"

"My father!" with a lofty gesture.

"Your father?"

"Yes, my father. He of whom I have so often spoken to you, and whose name you seem ever to avoid."

"I am sorry; I should like to have known your

father. He certainly did not know France. He was jealous of her. He feared that her eminence injured Italy. He was wrong. His Italian jealousy cried out in vain. What is immotral cannot die! Why did your father not admire France?"

"He? He loved it with the ardor of a son. His love for France cost him his life."

"His love for France cost him his life?"

"It did."

"The Count d'A Prata?"

"That is!"—

"Your father?"

"Why—yes."

"What are you saying, Rose?"

"Nothing," murmured Rose, becoming pale, fearing that she had gone too far. He looked at her a moment compassionately, smiled, and said:

"The words of the poet have carried you away, or rather I should say, your genius in giving them expression has worked upon your nervous system until you take one thing for another. Come to me," and he opened wide his arms to her. "I am your own, your true, devoted lover, and I will love you the same in any land, and under whatever sun, our lot may lead us."

She recoiled instinctively, although she went forward to him. She shrank into herself. His burst of passion touched no affectionate chord in her, but rather seemed to rouse what was baneful and unruly. Her hand stole insensibly toward the stiletto in her bosom, but she put it back with a strong movement, and replied to his caresses with all the force at her command.

"Night is closing in," he said; "come, let us go home."

They resumed their way, but no longer in the loving manner of an hour ago. They walked side by side, he holding her hand, silent, thoughtful.

"Marcel," she said, "I wounded your feelings just now, wounded them in a manner that must be most painful to a patriotic man, and I have only just come to realize it. I was carried away, I regret it. The poem was taught me in my youth by an old teacher who had received it from my father in one of his bursts of passion. I pray you to forget it, and forgive me."

"I have already forgotten it, sweet Rose," said the young viscount, "and I could treasure up no ill feeling against you. That word

‘forgive’ will never be necessary between us.”

He took her head between his hands and kissed it passionately. She blushed crimson, for she perceived a servant coming down the side of the hill on the side of the castle.

Rose started, and uttered a little cry, and Marcel looked up. He frowned as the man came toward them, and would have broken out in anger, but she restrained him.

“There is a gentleman at the castle,” said the man when he got up to Marcel, “and he wishes to see the Princess de Carpegna at once.”

“What?” cried Rose.

“At once,” ejaculated Marcel.

“Those were his words, viscount,” continued the man, holding out a card to Rose.

She took it quickly and burst into a loud fit of laughter.

“Ha, ha, ha! Old Giacomo! My prime minister, master of the house, and majordomo, who thinks when he wants me all he has to do is to say: ‘Here, at once.’ I thought so—Ha, ha, ha! I shall be there at once,” she said to the man; “tell him so.”

She changed color, as the man turned his back on them, a dark shade passed over her

face, and she was almost speechless for a moment, but she quickly recovered, and said to Marcel:

"Will you excuse me while I go and receive my ancient tyrant?"

"Why, certainly."

"I will prepare him to meet you, and then you may come in."

"Very good."

"He knows nothing of my life. Indeed, he thinks that I am still a small girl, and ought to be whipped when I am naughty."

She tore up the card as she spoke, and when he asked to see it, she had only some small bits of it in her hands. The rest had fallen among the leaves.

"The card would tell you nothing," she said.

"'Giacomo, King of the Roses,' was all there was on it. He is in his second childhood. In half an hour!" she added.

"Very good. In half an hour."

She flew up the hill like a fawn and was soon lost to view over the summit. Marcel watched her while he could, and thought what a wayward and exquisite creature she was. How full of surprises, how loving, how devoted, how true.

The very pain she caused him enhanced his love for her; the abrupt and ever-changing moods that swayed her, made him more anxious to bind her to him. He could not bear her out of his sight, for fear he should never again see her; some whim might come into her head, and she would fly. He feared it at that moment, as never before, while he gazed at her flying shadow on the ground, and saw her rise over the brow of the hill. A great void came into his heart, and he sat on the trunk of a fallen tree to pass away the time until he could go to her. As his mind glanced back over the past and brought him to that instant he thought his father unreasonable to refuse to consent to his marriage. He would do without it. He would go into the courts, and persuade Rose that it was necessary they should be man and wife at once.

The idea pleased him. He was like a boy with a new toy, every change that was agreeable to him seemed to be in his favor. This very old major-domo, or tutor of her childhood, would be an excellent ally. He would take him into his confidence, and together they would impress on Rose the need of haste.

Giacomo must be a good old fellow. He already liked him. He was sure the Prince of Roses was a simple-minded, stout old man with a loud voice, a red face, and a heart of gold. He was soon whistling an air from the "Marriage of Figaro," and knocking the briars about with a stick he had picked up.

Rose stopped when she was out of sight of her lover, and dropped the skirts she held in her hand. She turned in the direction of Marcel and her face became as dark as night. Throwing back her hair, and waving her hand in the air, she declaimed again the poem that had aroused so much anguish in him. Her eyes flashed as she spoke, the whole genius of the woman opened up to the task, and made it an expression of hate, such as is rarely witnessed on the mimic stage. She shook her clenched fist in the direction of Marcel when she had finished and repeated the line written on the card she had torn up a few moments before: "Time presses, time presses, foul bird of a foul nest, and time will keep pressing until I see you dead and black at my feet. I loathe myself for ever having allowed you to look upon me; my flesh creeps at every thought of the touch of your

hand! I'd tear those eyes out now, only that I know the day will come when you will try to loathe me for the ruin I have wrought you. Time presses. Yes, time, indeed, presses. I am hungry for the last act, my heart is already sick of the waiting. I have been your minister, and have led you into a hell that no man yet has been able to describe. A hell of body and soul, of heart and mind, a hell of toil and torment, a hell without redemption. You are steeped in a love that will never leave you, that will not die out, but like the furnace in the mountain keep rumbling on for ages. I have been the serpent that lured to the pit, the will-o'-the-wisp that betrayed you in the dark. I have made my eyes to glisten and my nerves to dance that you might love me with the force of passion, and you took the false for the fair and died. Your agony is yet to come, mine is here now."

She turned and ran toward the house, but coming to a giant oak, fell on her knees beside it. She folded her hands as if in prayer and looking to the sky murmured:

"Forgive me, Jack! Oh! my beloved! No part of me went out to him. I am yours, Jack, yours and yours alone. My heart is

yours, my gentle, faithful love, my Jack, my soul. Forgive me, oh! forgive, and believe that not a thought was ever his. This clay is but a coarse and vicious case, dear Jack, but love is like the soul, immortal."

She rose and looked once more in the direction of Marcel. "Ha! Ha!" she laughed hysterically, "you thought you killed Carpegna, you will wake to find there is another duel to be fought—one to the death, your death. Your dream is over."

She turned and went slowly to the house. At the door two servants met her. "The gentleman is in the parlor, madame," said one. She passed in between them.

XVII

A SURPRISE

In the parlor was Marino, caressing his mustache, and looking out of the window. Rose entered and he was so engrossed by the contemplation of the lawn and the flower-beds that he did not hear her.

"You wish to see me, sir," she said, standing in the middle of the room.

Marino turned, and bowed low. "Your pardon, Madame La Princess, your pardon, a thousand times. I had forgotten myself in the lovely picture to be seen from this window."

"What is your message, sir?"

"As I took the liberty of putting on my card to your highness, time presses, and there is other work to be done. The first act of the comedy is over, the scene changes, and we are soon to raise the curtain on the second. Then we shall reveal a grand catastrophe, the grandest yet brought before the public, and

your Highness shall play the leading part."

"Enough, sir, who sent you?"

"His excellency the Prince de Carpegna, your most noble husband."

"And his orders are?"

"His request, your highness, is that you accompany me to Paris. I have a carriage that will take us to the railway station, and time presses. It is a trumpery affair, but the best the village affords, though not what I should like to provide for your highness."

"Lead the way, I am ready."

"I have prepared three lines for the young gentleman. I suppose I may leave them on the table."

"Anywhere you like."

He bowed and went out of the house before her. She folded a black lace wrap about her shoulders, took a hat from the rack in the hall, and followed him. Marino went straight on and Rose followed. At the gate was a low tumble-down, lumbering coach. Marino opened the door with much ceremony and stood beside it. Rose passed him as if she had never seen him before, and stepped into the vehicle. He went up beside the driver, and they started for the railroad station. It was dark, and be-

ginning to get cold. Rose almost shivered as she sat in the old barouche. Still a sense of freedom came over her, and she felt almost like a bird liberated from a cage. That joy was somewhat subdued by the promise of Marino that she was called for other work, and she knew the kind that was likely to be demanded of her by Carpegna.

Marino was off the box and at the carriage door with surprising alacrity, the moment the horses were pulled up in front of the little railroad station. He opened the door for Rose with the dexterity of a footman, closed it, and dismissed the vehicle. He took a seat in the station at a respectful distance from his lovely charge, and conducted himself in all respects like a man entirely impressed with the dignity and importance of his mission. A close examination of his face, however, would have revealed a glimmer now and then of the satisfaction that reigned in the man. Rose saw it, and wondered at its meaning. She knew the revengeful, devilish nature of the man well, and she wondered what scheme was in contemplation that gave him so much delight. She remained quiet for some time, studying Marino, but as the train was late, they had

much longer to wait than they expected. She accordingly set about attempting to draw from her fellow conspirator some idea of the new enterprise.

"I hardly know by which name to address you," she ventured tentatively.

"Name, your highness?"

"Yes. I knew you in London as Marino, and at the duel you were Traventi."

"Ah, yes! Either, your highness. Any name will do from you. In reality it is Marino de Traventi, but Marino or Traventi, as you find it easier. Delightful duel, artistically carried out! I like art; I am an artist, though a poor one—a musician, as your highness has heard—and I adore things conducted in an artistic way. That is the Italian way; I am an Italian. So is the Prince de Carpegna. He is a great artist, and a great Italian. The princess eclipses all; she is a wonder in beauty, genius and patriotism, she is truly a magnificent Italian. The duel! Ah! the duel was divine! Think how it was planned. The viscount and the princess the prince, and the distich, the insult, the quarrel, the challenge, the thing done. What a night! Then the meeting in the park. The lovely princess behind the

bushes, the prince hit, and on the way to send the young fool to examine the sulphur mines of the Inferno, when he sees the enchantress peeping through the trees. Quicker than the flash of the pistol the mind of the great prince acts. 'No,' it says, 'you shall be stung to a living death by the serpent's glance, and then you shall die a lingering death by your own hand;' and he sent a bullet in the air. He fainted to oblige the gentlemen, and sent me to you with a message. I had the honor of finding you among the trees, and communicating to you the suggestions of my lord and prince, the greatest of all Italians."

"I remember," she replied absently, but it suddenly struck her that Marino had taken a turn at hiding in the bushes and that he had been around the castle previous to that day. She looked on him curiously as she said:

"You were in the woods to-day when I was out walking there with the Viscount Besnard."

"I was, and heard the great oration. I would like to have applauded, but dared not. It was sublime. Genius of the grandest order. The words of Scipione, delivered by the daughter, to the son of the assassin. It was glorious! You were inspired. I have seen them

all, but no one of them ever rose to that. The feeling, the melody, the fire, the enthusiasm, the passion, the scorn, the hate, the denunciation, all swelling out in grand diapason. The woods rang with it. And then the majesty of the delivery, the glory of the gesture, the heavenly inspiration of the artist!"

"You also know then of the other occurrence in the woods to-day?"

"The marriage business? I do, and your highness carried it off with great dignity."

"And now you are carrying me off," she added laughingly.

"According to orders."

"I am glad."

The train came dashing up to the platform, they entered a compartment, and were carried to Paris.

XVIII

CHASING A SHADOW

Something more than half an hour elapsed before Marcel reached the house—not that he was not in a hurry to rejoin Rose, but he spent more time in the enjoyment of his happiness than he was aware of. A strange uneasiness came over him, as he approached the house. He had never before remarked how cold, how lonely it seemed. He would take Rose to Paris, or London, or Italy, whichever she preferred, as he was sure she did not like that residence. It seemed to him to frown more dismally the nearer he came, and when he reached the steps leading in from the rear he wondered what had become of all the servants. There was not one to be seen. There was a small colony of them, and usually when he returned there were two or three to meet him, and ascertain his desires—what did it mean?

And where was Rose?

He entered the house, and it seemed to him that he had just stepped into a place out of which the life had fled. A servant came slowly toward him, and another appeared in the distance behind him. It looked to Marcel as if they were afraid of him. He passed them in the hall, and went into the great front reception room. It was bare and empty as a vault in a cemetery. He looked out of the window but could only see the ghostly shadows of the trees, bending and moaning in the night breeze. He walked into the back room, which Rose sometimes used as sitting-room, but no sign of her was there. He dared not ask for Rose, he did not wish to show his anxiety. A servant met him in the hall as he left the library, and said: "Madame La Princess went out, monsieur."

"Out!"

"Yes, sir."

"Alone?"

"No, sir, with the gentleman who came to see her. She received him in the great chamber, and, after a short talk, they went away together."

"She did not say where she was going?"

"No, sir."

"What did she wear?"

"Only a lace scarf and a hat she took off the rack here in the hall."

"Oh, then, she is not gone far."

"The gentleman had a carriage waiting at the park gate, and they went away in that," the gate-keeper said.

"Ah, then, some of her poor have been taken suddenly ill and she has gone to see them."

"Very likely, sir."

"Order me a trap, and I will go over to the priest's; I might be of service."

"Certainly, sir," replied the servant, rushing off to the stables, but feeling quite certain the viscount would not overtake the princess.

Marcel himself was not buoyed up with very strong hope that he would meet her, but he was determined to make every effort to do so. She could not have gone far, and the place was too small for any one to hide long in. It never occurred to him that she had gone to Paris, though a strange feeling came over him, that he had lost her forever. The disappearance was so sudden, so unexpected, so motiveless, that it stunned him, and left him without a notion of what to do. The night, the lonely house, and the reticence of

the servants, added to the mystery, and made him sick at heart. A groom drove up to the door with a trap and he got into it mechanically. He drove to the priest's, the doctor's, the mayor's, the druggist's, but no one had seen or heard of the princess. He was on the point of giving up the search when the postmaster entered the pharmacy and said he had seen madame at the station with a tall, dark gentleman, and that they had gone to Paris. Marcel thanked him and went home. The light had been brought into the great room, and one of the servants had found the slip of paper on the table. Marcel read it, and re-read it, and dropped into a chair. "She is gone!" he cried; "gone! She thought she loved me, but she discovered she did not, and she has fled with another. Oh! comedienne! I have found you out at last. You have trifled with me, and mocked me. Out of my heart forevermore!"

He tore the paper into fragments. The next moment he threw himself on a sofa and burst into a burning flood of tears.

"No, no! It cannot be. Some one has poisoned her mind. She loves me, loves only me, and I will fight for her to the death. She

is mine, mine only. I cannot live without her. Oh! Rose, Rose, come back to me! Come, my beloved, and all shall be forgiven. I love you, Rose, love you with heart and soul, and will be your slave, your dog, forevermore. Oh! Rose! Rose!"

He walked to the station, and took the midnight train to Paris. The following morning he appeared in his father's house.

XIX

TETE-A-TETE

Jack Burroughs was too much engrossed by his own affairs, or he might have saved himself a great deal of time and labor. He kept himself to himself, and prosecuted his search for Rose single-handed. He never spoke to anyone on the subject, and he never heard her name mentioned. It would have been all different if he had not lived so exclusively. She was the talk of the town, and if he had frequented the clubs, the *cafes*, the restaurants, the boulevards, where the young men spent their time, he would have heard all about her and Marcel. There was first the duel, then the elopement, as it was called, then Marcel's absence from his duties in the Council of State, and afterwards the marriage. These many strong and varying points of interest prolonged the sensation, and there was hardly a waiter or cab-driver in the city that did not know the story. Jack got an

inkling of it one day, as he sat in a *cafe* on the Boulevard des Italiens, from a paragraph in a paper. An allusion was made to the continued absence of the viscount, and the charming excuse a princess might make for such continued neglect of duty. Jack almost bounded from his chair. He rose in his slow way, and got a cab. He thought he would call on the Count Besnard, for he had not seen any of the family since his sister went home. He only knew Marcel slightly. He had met him but once and then only for a minute. The old count was too ill to receive when Jack called, but Gabrielle was delighted to see him. She met him in the drawing-room, and told him all he wanted to know without his having to ask a question. Jack could not help noticing her beauty and vivacity as she spoke, and sympathised with her when she became indignant over her brother's disgrace.

"I can't go out on account of it," she said; "not that I go out so very much, because I am lame, you know," and she looked up at him inquiringly to see if he thought much of her lameness.

"Lame! are you?" said Jack. He really had not remembered whether she was so or not.

"Oh, yes, quite lame! Have you not remarked it?"

"No, indeed."

"Oh, now, you say that to spare my feelings. I shall write to Maude, and tell her you are taking to Paris ways, and making compliments."

"I assure you I never noticed that you were lame, and even then, I don't think that amounts to much. Lady Baddeng, thought the most beautiful woman in England, is very lame, and you know the Princess of Wales has quite a halt."

"Ah, yes, I know about the princess."

"Why, after she came to England all the women in the country took to halting on one foot. It was the fashion."

"It's my fashion, too, but that is not where I got it," and she laughed a soft, sweet, musical laugh, that sounded very pleasantly in Jack's ears. He thought she resembled a delicate hot-house flower, and fully justified all he had heard Maude say of her.

"So it appears they like lameness in women in England. I confess I never noticed a disposition that way when I was there, but if you say so it must be so."

"The English are odd," said Jack, "and peculiarities invariably attract their attention."

"Oh, my, wouldn't it be splendid, if some big lord would come over in a ship, take a fancy to my peculiarity, and carry me off?"

"I don't know about that; there may be quite a lot of people who would not care to part with you, though you are lame."

"I never thought of that. Now it's very nice of you to think of that; of course, there are papa, and—and—Marcel, and Cousin Delisle, and—and—I assure you I never thought there were so many persons who would be sorry to see me carried off, anyway. I have been so much alone since my mother died, and I have been so much neglected in society on account of my infirmity, for you know if one won't dance the young men won't bother with one. Then my father needed me nearly all the time. I have come to be a sort of secretary to him. And with it all I have come to repose myself as a single flower in a pot. It is not so, as you have very graciously pointed out, and I am very much obliged to you for it. I shall think more of myself hereafter."

"I would."

"But don't you think the lord might come over anyhow if only for the fun of the thing?"

"He might do worse."

"Oh, Mr. Burroughs!"

"Well, when a man is doing a thing at all, he might as well do a good thing."

"I shall certainly write to Maude about you—Paris is spoiling you. Dear me, you brothers give us poor girls a deal of trouble; you only met my brother once, I think."

"Yes, the day of the garden party."

"He is so good, so good, so good, and yet he has brought us into such disgrace. Papa is ill from it, and Aunt Delisle had to shut up her house and go into the country. All Paris has been talking about it, and the papers, I am told they were full of it. But did you not hear of it?"

"No, I was busy, and then I see only commercial Englishmen, and few of them even talk French."

"He fought a duel, you know, with the Prince de Carpegna."

"The Prince de Carpegna?"

"Yes, and the next day went off with the princess."

"Ro—I mean the Princess de Carpegna?"

"Yes. You know her. They call her Rose."

"No, no, I don't know her. I have heard the name. The Princess de Carpegna, and Rose. That is all."

"Well, Rose must be her name. They call her the wild Rose, the beautiful Rose, the charming Rose, and now the Rose of Lasseville. That's where my brother has taken her to his country chateau in the Midi. He is going to marry her there, and has so written to my father."

"My God! that can't be true!" said Jack, stupefied.

"It is quite true. Papa refused his consent, of course, and now Marcel will have to go into the courts."

"Married! married!" ejaculated Jack, forgetting where he was, and thinking only of the woman he loved.

"She must be a horrid creature, mustn't she?"

"I!— I!—" and a look of pain came into Jack's face that brought the tears into the willing eyes of Gabrielle. She misinterpreted the look, and thought it was one of kindness and sympathy for her. She never dreamed that her words were cutting the heart out of

the giant sitting in front of her and suffering agony.

"Think of it," she went on, "run away with the man who killed her husband, and the very next day."

"Yes, yes," returned Jack, half aloud, thinking to himself, for he then remembered that Rose had disappeared just at that time.

"And before all Paris," added Gabrielle.

"Yes, yes!" groaned Jack.

"It is not a proper subject for me to talk about," said Gabrielle, "but I can't help it, and I must say something about it, for it is killing me."

Jack looked at her, and made no answer.

"She must be a bold, bad creature," said Gabrielle, "to lure a young man away, and take no thought of his position."

"There may be extenuating circumstances," said Jack, who could hardly see any, but who could not bear to hear her badly spoken of if it crushed the life out of him.

"Only an angel could say such words," cried out Gabrielle, carried away by the subject.

"We never know, we never know," said Jack. "I am a lawyer, you know, and accus-

tomed to look for motives and springs of action. The act sometimes is shadowed by the provocation."

"You would have to be a very great lawyer to find an excuse for that woman. She has ruined us all."

"I hope it may not be so bad as that."

"It is just as bad as that, and she is as bad and wicked as she can be."

"We must be patient with the erring," said Jack, and there was a plaintiveness in his tone that vibrated through the young girl from head to foot.

"That is true," she said, and she burst into tears. "You are right. There may be something we do not know and we have no right to judge. But, she has brought disgrace on us—oh! such disgrace!"

"That is the sad and painful part of it; but she has not escaped."

"She, oh! she," exclaimed Gabrielle, again going back to her anger, "she is nothing. An adventuress. I have no doubt they will find out she is not a princess. Probably some princess of the slums, who manufactured her own title."

"She is a woman," said Jack.

"She is, she is," replied the girl, again bursting into tears, more at the sound of the man's voice, than any compassion she felt for Rose.

"And has a heart," said Jack.

"Maybe, maybe."

"Don't let your wrongs make you unjust. The truth may all come out some day, and you will be sorry."

"Oh! how can I be sorry for anyone who has brought such misery on me?"

"You would be sorry to do an injustice."

"Ye—s."

"Then if you learned some day that this lady had been unjustly censured you would regret having joined in the general condemnation."

"I suppose I would, but I can't see what excuse she could ever have for acting as she has."

"There is an excuse, justifiable to some, at the bottom of every act," continued Jack, as if he were arguing a case. He was appealing to himself as much as to Gabrielle, and trying to find a cause for forgiveness for Rose. He saw that Gabrielle was in love with him, saw it with trepidation and sorrow, and knew

what she must be suffering. The hopelessness of such a love struck a tender chord in the heart of Jack, and he felt a pity and compassion for the young girl, amounting almost to affection. Her loneliness, her loveliness, her devotion to her brother, swept the sympathy called forth by the situation, like the stroke of practiced fingers on a harp, and he would willingly have borne all the pain if he could have spared her. It was the dawn of a new light, and pouring balm on an open wound. He was grateful for it. He felt its softening, soothing effects, and although she abused Rose, as he probably would have himself abused her, he was pleased that she gave him the opportunity to say a word in her defense.

"There may be," said Gabrielle, after a pause, "although I cannot see what excuse can be offered in this case."

"There is only one excuse a woman can offer," said Jack, who felt an awful twinge inside as he spoke the words.

"Love?"

"Yes."

"Love is capable of any sacrifice!"

"In women."

"In men, too, I hope."

"That I don't know."

"Were you never in love?"

"I am a lawyer, you know, and lawyers are schooled to deal only with the facts of life."

"But love is a part of life."

"To be sure, but we never bring it into court, except to influence the fatherly instincts of a jury."

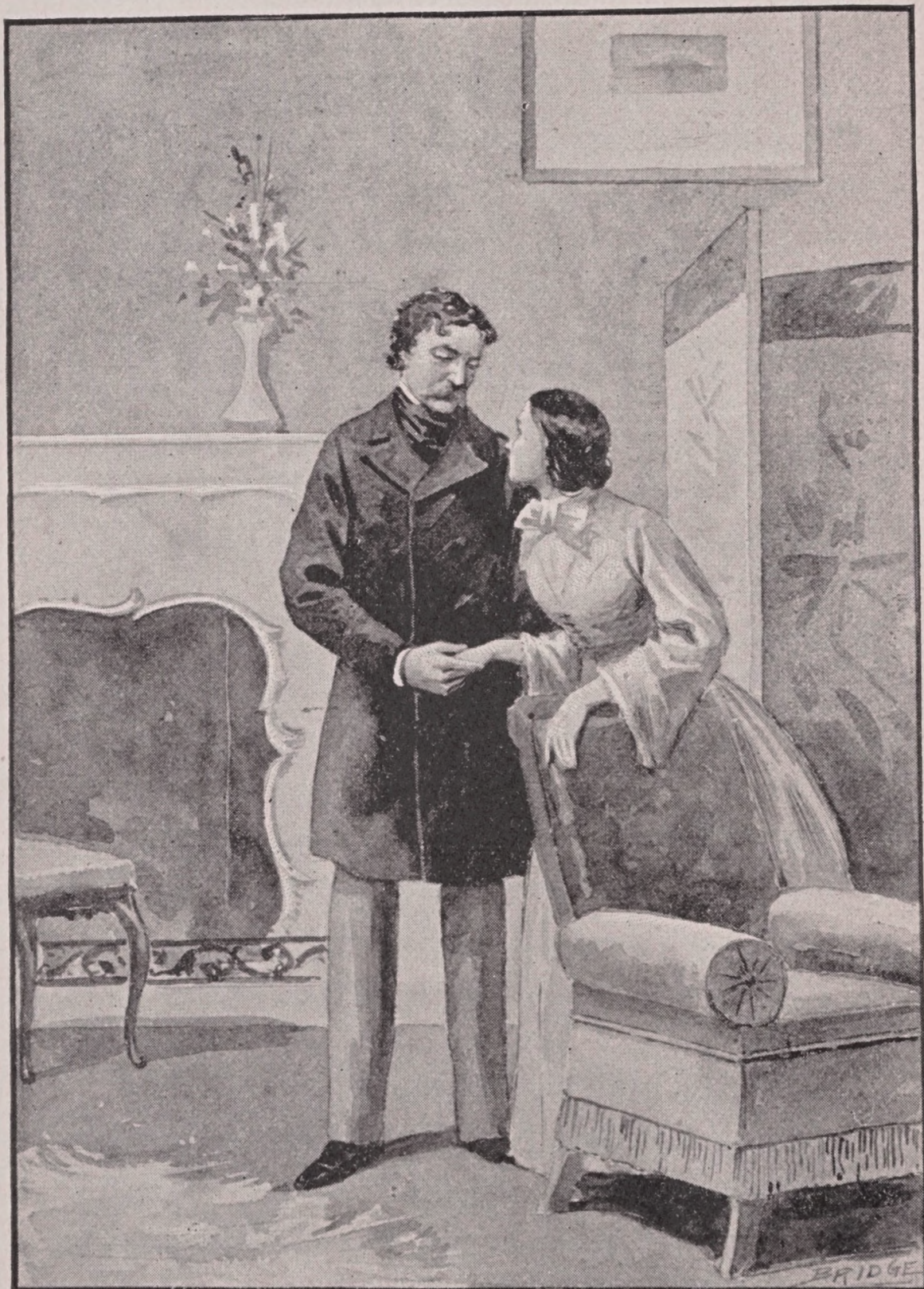
"I think I am glad to hear you were never in love."

"Because I am not likely to make a fool of myself?"

"No, I don't think you would do that under any circumstances. I think if you felt an unhappy love you would hide it from the world."

"You give me credit for too much courage and power. I am afraid I am as soft as the next man and just as likely to do the wrong thing under exciting circumstances as this princess."

"You have made me half forgive her. She must have been in love with Marcel. It is no wonder. He is very handsome, and very brave. But then it seems an awful thing for a woman to accept the man who killed her husband."



"YOU COULD DO ME A GREAT FAVOR," SHE SAID.

"Who can fathom the human heart?"

"No one. No one. I forgive the princess for your sake; there," and she held out to him her little hand.

"And I almost forgive her for yours," said Jack as he held it.

"You could do me a great favor," she said, "in return, if you have the time and inclination."

"I have the inclination," returned Jack, "and I will take the time."

"Go and see my brother. Tell him my father is dying, and repeat to him all I have said to you concerning his life and prospects here. It is the mission of a brother, and I ask you to take it as a sister. I know, as I know you, that if any voice can bring him to a sense of his duty to those he loves, and who love him, it will be yours. He is very proud, and the knowledge of the ruin he has wrought and the disgrace attaching to his name will bring him to a consideration of his position."

"I have little hope of succeeding, but I will undertake the task."

"You may do so as my counsel."

"Yes, as your counsel."

"I wish I could engage you as my perpetual counsel."

"Why not? My office is in the Temple, and open to all comers. I have no professional cards with me, or I might give you one for the address."

She laughed heartily.

"I will get the address from Maude, and maybe call on you some day in the Temple, Prove worthy in my first case, and you may rely on a continuance of my favor."

"I will do my best."

"You will start for Lasseville—when?"

"To-day."

"And I shall hear from you?"

"At once."

"Success!"

"Good-bye."

Jack kissed her hand, and left the room.

Gabrielle went singing up the stairs, and old Joachim had to call her attention to the fact that her father was ill.

XX

THE GHOST AND THE LADY

Marino conducted Rose to a magnificent house in the suburbs of Paris, and left her at the door. The servants were waiting in the hall, and ready to receive her, as if she had only been out a few hours. They were all new people to her, but were so well trained, and admirably suited to their positions, that there was not a ripple in the surface of the reception. The maid took the hat and lace shawl, and led the way to the boudoir. Half an hour later dinner was served, and that was scarcely over, when the Prince de Carpegna called.

"I did not expect the pleasure of a visit from you, sir," said Rose, coldly.

"Am I not welcome?"

"You are in your own house, I presume."

"No, madame, I am in yours."

"I will not ask you to explain the riddle, but accept what you say as the fact."

"The proof is at hand, and I will take the liberty of recalling to you, that I only deal in facts—ugly facts for some people. I hope they are not so to you, or that you do not so regard them. I have endeavored to make your path to success as pleasant as I could, and regret very much that I have failed to satisfy you."

"Well, sir."

"May I not sit down?"

"Certainly. And won't you be seated?"

"Now may I ask what it is you complain of?"

"Everything."

"That is comprehensive, at all events. Am I included in the catalogue?"

"You are."

"Do you object to my being here?"

"I do."

"Because—?"

"When people die, they are not expected to call after dinner."

"Then take it that this is my ghost."

"I would not gain much by that, for the shadow appears to be as active as the substance."

"Take me for a spirit, madame, and when my business is completed, I shall disappear, and not trouble you again."

"Be it so."

"That disposes of my presence here at this moment. I am received as a ghost."

"Yes, sir," said Rose solemnly, not knowing where he was trying to lead her, and attentively watching his snapping blue eyes.

"Now, madame, to show you that I am a gentlemanly ghost, and one who is at all times desirous of being agreeable to a lady, I will vanish through the keyhole this instant, if you wish it, and give way to any substantial visitor you may expect."

"You know very well I expect no one. I could expect no one. You sent for me suddenly, brought me here, like one blindfolded, and I am entirely at your mercy."

"It is the other way, but let that pass. I will go further, I will defer my visit to another night, although time presses, and give you opportunity to renew any agreeable acquaintance that may be languishing for your presence."

"You are a very good ghost, but now that you are here I prefer to hear all you have to say."

"That's better—well, then, to be brief, we have arrived at a point in our affairs, when a

little explanation is necessary. Let me ask you at the outset whether you consider that I have carried out my share of the contract so far?"

"Yes."

"Thank you. I found you in London, a prima donna of the slums; I brought you into the Hotel Arditì; there I pointed out the assassin of your father, the seducer of your mother; we entered into a compact to destroy them, because I had almost as strong motives as you. Scipione was my friend and his slayer the enemy of my country. You remember your words, 'I am yours, body and soul.' I made you the Princess de Carpegna, gave you a position, wealth, all that a woman could desire, and I trespassed no farther. I am an old man, I have lived past the age of love, and what I had I gave to my country. You were therefore saved an uninviting clause in the bargain. I put in your way a young man. I risked my life to do that, according to my notion, and that of the most eminent council of our brethren, and I spared his life that you might strike a deadlier blow. You have done so, and done it well. No woman in existence could have done it so well. We have watched

every move as you have doubtless suspected, and we have nothing but wonder and admiration for your supreme ability."

She listened with folded hands and never moved.

He stopped, apparently to take breath, but really to give her an opportunity to speak, but she was silent.

"You are a true daughter of Italy, and of Scipione Lavetti. He was a true son of our native land, and a great man—a grand man. He was not only great and grand in genius, but in his sufferings."

The tears sprung into Rose's eyes, and her lips closed in anger. Two feelings swayed her, love and revenge. The memory of her father was a passion with her; to punish his assassin the blood of her veins. The prince dwelt on her father to prepare her for what he had next to announce. He led her on skillfully, exciting her feelings, and rousing her enthusiasm for Italy, which cooled quickly when Jack Burroughs came into mind. The prince knew that, and knew also that it was the rock ahead of his scheme.

"If he were alive now he would be at our head," continued the prince, "he would lead

us to victory. The traitors who have destroyed our plans and checked our course would be laid low, the old flag would be raised, and we should march in triumph to our homes. He is here in you. He has sent us from that land across the gulf, his other self, in genius, in devotion, in grandeur, in subtlety, in capacity for suffering, and in hope in the nation's cause. We are gathered now at the foot of the altar his hand has lighted, and the incense of his blood perfumed, praying for deliverance. We are worshiping there, and led on to the sacrifice by the white-souled priestess whom Scipione has selected to minister the mystic rites. His own flesh, his own blood he has chosen, and in the track of that flesh and blood we will tread, and lay down our own until peace has been restored to his ashes, and the hopes he cherished crowned."

"Father! Father!" cried the poor girl, in accents of agony, and the tears rolled down her cheeks.

"We have dealt the first blow, and dealt it in the immediate vicinity of his taking off; the opportunity for a second presents itself in a higher and more important place."

"What do you mean?—The father?" asked Rose, looking suddenly up, and all her apprehensions aroused.

"No."

"What then?"

"You remember the ball at the Tuileries?"

"I do."

"You remember the grand march?"

"Of the Emperor and his suite, yes."

"Of Bonaparte and his servants, yes."

"Well."

"A lady dropped her fan."

"I did."

"Bonaparte picked it up, and handed it to you, smiling as he did so."

"He handed it to me."

"And was observed to smile most graciously as he did so."

"Well?"

"When he went to his private apartments, he inquired who you were."

"Was he told?"

"Yes."

"By whom?"

"The Baron La Chesnaye. He asked after you again two days later, and was told of your flight with my antagonist. He was angry."

"He took a very great liberty."

“Unquestionably, but he was in the habit of that. As time wore on and you did not reappear in Paris he grew worse. He was not only in love, but furiously jealous. Those nearest to him thought the young viscount would lose his place in the State Council, notwithstanding the former important services of the father to the empire. Bonaparte could not brook the idea that you had fallen in love with this young attache, and yet it seemed like it, you remained away so long. La Chesnaye was losing favor as he could not discover you, and bring you to the fat traitor. A man met him one day in a club where he was bemoaning his fate, and informed him that he thought you would be soon in town. He flew to his master, and received promises of quick advancement if his words were true. He went back to the man. It is no matter who he was, he was a friend of ours. The man guaranteed that you would be here to-morrow, on condition that this house and ground were purchased in your name, and the deed left at a notary's for you. That was done; you will receive them to-morrow at noon.”

“And for all this?”

“You are to entertain Bonaparte.”

"I refuse."

"Hear me out."

"No more of that. Anything else you like, but I will not be submitted to that again."

"Listen to me a moment."

"I must."

"For one evening."

"No, not one instant. I am ready to go on, or I am ready to die, I will not become a toy again."

"You do not understand me."

"Only too well. I did not know what I was doing when I went to Lasseville, but I have died a thousand deaths there in addition to the defilement. No, no, no." She rose and paced the room.

"This man is the enemy of our race."

"Then kill him."

"We have arranged to do so."

"And I am to be the decoy?"

"He was a carbonaro, and betrayed us. He is as much against us now as he pretended to be with us. He swore allegiance to us; he has broken his oath."

"Shoot him down!"

"That is what we propose to do, and we want you to help us."

"Not that way. Not that way."

"Let La Chesnaye bring him here. There will be a supper, and company. If he retire to talk privately to you, we will send the viscount to see him, and he will do the killing."

Rose started, and looked at the prince in amazement.

"It is a diabolical plot," she said, "and may succeed."

"If it should, you shall be free the next day. I have had papers drawn up, granting you a full divorce; with them one million francs will be placed in your hand, the day after this affair, and you will never again hear of me or my brethren, unless you wish to."

"Prince, you are a bold man."

"I gave my name to the most intrepid woman alive."

"The attendants and soldiers would shoot us down, there would be no to-morrow for us."

"They would deal with him; you would be on the side of Bonaparte; you might draw a dagger, and rush on his assailant."

"Dangerous work."

"But worth the doing."

"They would find us all out before the

affair was finished, and then the guillotine would begin its task."

"They could not hold us responsible for a madman's act."

"They may trace the plot to us. The first thing they would stumble against would be the ghost of a live man."

He saw she was arguing the thing out in her own mind, and that she was losing interest in it, so he determined to arouse her jealousy.

"We have provided against all that, and only ask of you the sacrifice of one evening's entertainment. After that you will be free. You may go where you like, see whom you like, be, in all respects, a free woman. It will be made plain that Bonaparte was just visiting at your house. They will take care of that for their own sakes, and show there was no impropriety in it. A number of his friends will be in the house at the time. This young man, delirious with jealousy, will rush in, not knowing who is there, and commit some wild act. It can hardly be less than murder, and then the authorities will deal with him. His father will not escape, and our accounts will be settled."

"It seems a little too cut and dry to succeed."

"By the way, there is a sister; you remember she was in the restaurant the night we met."

"Yes."

"A very pretty girl; she has fallen desperately in love with a gentleman in the Temple."

"What!" Turning suddenly like a tigress, and confronting the prince.

"Here is a slip of paper old Giorto brought me, the day after the duel. He found it on her desk, when she was called to see her father who was ill. Giorto is a servant in their house, and one of our people."

Rose read the will poor Gabrielle had written the morning she thought her brother had gone to his death. At the sight of Jack's name written by another woman's hand her blood seemed to thicken and boil. It rushed to her head, and then to her heart, and appeared to set her all on fire. She gazed at the prince, and said:

"This is no trick?"

"The princess will excuse me."

"I know, I know; you would not descend to that."

"That is the young lady's writing, her pa-

per, the arms of the family are stamped on it, and it was brought to me as I told you. The gentleman it names has been here in Paris for some time, as you are aware, and was at her house yesterday. He had a long interview with that young lady, and accepted the commission at her hands to try to bring back her brother. Giorto's account was that he had fallen in love with her."

Rose grasped a chair to keep her from fainting.

"This young gentleman has gone to Las-seville to see the brother, and persuade him to a sense of his duty. He appears to be lost to all else."

"Send the Baron La Chesnaye here to-morrow."

"I will do so."

Rose burst into tears, and threw herself face downward on a sofa.

The prince left the room without a word.

XXI

BECAUSE HE WAS HIS SON

It was a lovely autumn evening and Paris was in one of its gayest humors.

In the family mansion on the Avenue de Breteuil, Gabrielle was seated beside her father. The night was already well advanced.

The Count Besnard appeared old and broken. A year had sufficed to bend his figure, only lately so straight and proud. His white hairs had grown whiter; his face had become furrowed with livid lines, and at the corners of the mouth hung deep ridges, marks of decrepitude. The cause of his suffering was at its height; syncope returned frequently, and the doctor did not conceal his uneasiness. In giving instructions to Gabrielle and the nurses he said:

“Above all things, save him from surprises, and everything likely to touch the emotions. I am afraid of a catastrophe.”

Gabrielle became a guard over her father;

she watched that no word or sign should reach him of the world outside, and she confined his thoughts, as much as possible, to religious subjects and the future life. Count Besnard was a devout man. He had inherited his mother's deep emotional nature, and during the later years of his life was a constant attendant at church. The old count was lying in a long low chair, his eyes closed, his hands crossed. He seemed asleep, but, to look at the bloodless pallor, and the silent immobility of the form, you would have pronounced it the great sleep of death.

Gabrielle was also much changed, and in a curiously different way. She was pale and thin; probably paler and thinner than formerly, from constant watching and sitting up, but the eye was bright, and there was hope. It looked as if she had secret information that the hand laid so heavily on her well-nigh prostrate father would be raised, and he would be restored to life. Her dress, too, manifested something of the same feeling. It had a bright and coquettish air that almost seemed out of place, and the spray of roses in her corsage indicated a condition of mind that could not have been suggested by the figure in the chair.

Two light taps on the door caused the young girl to start. She rose and opened it. The old servant, Philomene, stood outside, her face as pale as ashes.

Gabrielle gazed at her in amazement.

"Miss Gabrielle!"

"What's the matter?"

"A—a—visitor."

"At this hour?"

Gabrielle trembled from head to foot.

A sudden emotion deprived her of speech. She thought that Jack could scarcely have had time to execute his commission and return, and he surely would not call on her at that hour of the night although he knew her anxiety to know the result.

"Who is it?" she inquired, hardly wanting to hear the answer.

"A visitor from a—a—a gentleman," said Philomene, "you must come down."

Gabrielle had to grasp the door frame for support.

The Count Besnard opened his eyes.

"Go, my child," he said, feebly, "and return and let me know the nature of this mystery."

He had heard the old woman, although she only whispered to her young lady.

"Yes, father," replied Gabrielle, going out, and closing the door softly behind her.

The invalid resumed his interrupted dreaming, but at the same time he was listening, waiting. It may have been that his mind was back in the turbulent past, and the gentle opening of the door was a relief to the surcharged conscience. He may have been thinking of Leonora, the beautiful wife of Scipione Lavetti, or Lavetti himself, or his own wife, who died so young of a broken heart. He may have been wondering whether there was pardon for such crimes as the hot blood of youth and passion had brought to his door, and whether the sins were to be visited on him or on his children. He had tried to atone for them. He had lived an austere and pleasureless life that he might appease the anger due his evil deeds, and had exhausted every human means to attract the punishment to him, and save those he loved from the consequences of his recklessness.. He prayed and gave alms, and had masses said, and scourged himself, that the cup might be snatched from their lips, and given to him to drain, but the rod was evidently to be applied to all, and the sins of the father were to carry their curse

down, down to other generations. There was misery in the thought—misery for him who had taken such pains to build and prepare a future for his name. The flower of his days was withered in the bloom, and no man wanted to gather it from the stem. His jealous eye had noted the strange affection come into the virgin heart of his child, and his own bled in anguish at the fact that it was not even suspected by its object. His son's affair was even worse than he had done, for the boy had killed the husband, and now wanted to marry the woman. He, too, had slain the man, but it was years after the woman had left him, and there was the excuse of politics in it.

Presently the old man raised his head. He heard an unusual coming and going in the house, the noise of voices, that of his daughter in particular. Some one was coming up the stairs, there were steps in the corridor, the door was pushed in timidly, and Marcel stood before him.

The count remained as he was. "You, sir!" he said, with indifference; "so you have come back?"

"Father, forgive me! I have suffered so

much," said the young man humbly, and without daring to approach the chair. There was no reply.

"Pardon me, sir, and, if you can, forgive me. I know I have outrageously offended you. I wished to force you to consent to a marriage unworthy of me, to give your name to a degraded creature, to open your house to her, your heart, your family; but I was mad! mad! mad! and knew not what I was doing—I have suffered, father, as no man has ever suffered before, and been punished as I deserved."

"Father, oh, father," murmured Gabrielle, like a supplicating echo.

The count raised his head feebly. "When did you leave Lasseville, may I ask," inquired he, looking steadily at his son.

"Yes, I know I ought to have sought you sooner, implored your clemency at once, but I have not dared—I—no—that is not so. I did not wish to—my frenzy still held me in chains; I was bound entirely; my companion fled; I tried to regain her; she escaped, I followed. I have hunted France, Italy, Austria, Germany; I searched all the great cities, and found nothing—no one. I employed a score of men to aid me in the pursuit, and I have dis-

covered no trace of her. Now my passion is dead, my madness cured; I have come here penitently for your pardon. Give it to me, father! Ah! sir, do not deny me the only comfort on earth."

Gabrielle threw herself at her father's feet as she used to when a child, and supplicated him to listen to Marcel.

"He is your son, my brother," she cried.

"I have dared to present myself here," continued Marcel, "because I wish to bid you good-bye. I cannot live in Paris under your anger, and the jeers of my old comrades, though in time I would care little for that, while I could never recover from your unforgiveness. My life is broken. I must make myself a new one. I want to go somewhere, I don't care where. I have asked to be sent to a distant consulate, and there, through duty well accomplished, I might be able to find some little satisfaction with myself. Might I ask you, sir, to use your influence for me in that matter?"

The count looked down at Gabrielle and stroked her head with his hand.

"Yes," he said in reply to Marcel, "I will speak to the minister."

Marcel bowed and left the room, Gabrielle

rose and followed him. The count was left alone, extended in his long chair. He listened to his children going away and shutting the door softly behind them. He heard their slow steps in the hall down the stairs and knew that Gabrielle was hanging on her brother, clinging to him to comfort him. They did not stop on the library floor, but continued down, and he heard the echo of their footfalls in the vestibule, and could see the old servants weeping as they approached the street door, toward a separation perhaps forever. Suddenly the old man sprang to his feet; he rushed to the chamber door, he flung it open with violence and called out:

“Marcel!”

The brother and sister in the hall stopped and looked up toward the count's room. He was at the head of the stairs—“Marcel! Marcel!” he cried. The son sprang up the stairs, the father opened his arms to him, the young man fell upon his breast, and both sobbed aloud. A long silence ensued, and Gabrielle entered the room.

XXII

PHANTOM OF THE NIGHT

“Because that this, my son, was dead, and has come to life, that he was lost, and that he has been found.”

Father, son and daughter spent hours in silent sympathy and happiness, and then the children, seeing signs of fatigue come over the old count, withdrew, after many tender passages of endearment.

Gabrielle conducted Marcel to his door; he kissed her on the forehead and bade her good night. At length he was alone. He was at home and in his own room, in which his boyhood had been spent and his manhood. Every old familiar object welcomed him, and the logs blazed merrily on the hearth. What a pleasure it was to lounge in his old reading-chair and gaze around. There was the lamp with its shade at his elbow, as if he had never left it. The books on the table that he had

last opened, the papers even on his desk, as he had thrown them, untouched.

“Dear Gabrielle, thoughtful, gentle sister, angel of purity and sweetness, what holy balm thy ministering hand has shed on this perturbed and passion-tossed wanderer from the paths of rectitude and honor.”

Marcel leaned his weary body back in the big chair, and sought the repose he so much needed. He remained there some time, looking into the fire, until he seemed to see the figure he had chased all over Europe, dancing before him in the flames, mocking him, and enticing him on to other places. It came and went, stood out from the logs and flew up the chimney, always joyous, dazzling, dashing, maddening in its grace and beauty. Marcel tried to drive it away as the fire drove it, but it came again, and again, and seemed to come only for him, and the oftener, the more he endeavored to quench it. Presently he rose, put a screen before the fire, and walked around to examine the objects on the walls, and divert his mind by their histories. He stood before the panoply, and admired once more the curious weapons of which it was made up, and went back in mind to the times

and places in which he had received them. He looked them all over, and coming to the pistols that had been used in the duel at Vancressor, he picked them up and threw them into the street.

He lingered fondly over the water-color paintings by his sister that adorned the walls, and smiled as he remembered the places they represented—scenes that she and he had visited together, or in company with others. There was the gulf, the shore scattered with peasant women picturesque and gay. Here was a landscape in Normandy, beside it the park at Lasseville. He started at the painting of the valley of the Dalles where he had last seen Rose, and turned it to the wall. Must he then be reminded of her everywhere, and see her nowhere? Was she to haunt him forevermore? He sought his home to avoid all memory of her, and she presented herself there at every turn. No, no, he was dead to her, he had blotted out all shadow of her, and she should not again torment him. Still he did not find the hoped-for peace. The calm of home was there, but a disturbing element from without came to ruffle it and destroy it.

He strolled into the library and thought he

would read, as sleep was out of the question. He dared not shut his eyes for the picture that would come up. His favorite poets were before him, yet he could not determine which one to take out of the case. He tried Chateaubriand, Hugo, de Vigny, Musset, Lamartine, Bauvide, de Lisle, and laid them down one after the other, unable to open the pages. At last he took up Alighieri mechanically and opened the volume. It might be said it opened itself in his hand.

"Love that quick inflames the noble heart," it said; "Love that does not grant the gift of loving to any creature loved—Love that leads to death."

Marcel shut the book, and flung it from him.

Yes, he knew that triplet of maledictions! How often, kissed by the caressing raven hair, bound in close embrace, carrying on his shoulder the weight of a resting head, he had read them—read them—again and again—with her, the wild Rose, the wayward child of the woods, the variable, laughing, mocking, moody queen of the sneering mob—the demon of delight, his soul's perdition.

He walked up and down his room, once more overcome by the old excitement.

"Love that leads to death!" Yes, that love must die for him. He would stifle it, kill it. He was master of himself now that she was away, and he was there in his home with his father and sister. He would think no more of her. He would efface her image from his mind, dispel the vanished phantom, the dream of a night disappearing at the dawn. His love was burned out. The flames had become extinct, the ashes were white and dead. She—Ha! ha! ha! and he burst into a fit of nervous laughter.

By and by fatigue overcame him, and he put out his lamp, threw himself on his bed, and tried to sleep.

His heavy head fell on the pillow, and he slept uneasily.

He woke with a start, and sat up.

He looked all around and saw nothing; the darkness was profound.

A sharp pain traversed his frame, and he bounded out of bed.

His heart tightened, his limbs trembled, and he had to grasp a chair to keep from falling. "It is she! she! the face I thought I had torn from my heart! the form I fancied dead to me forever! She! she! always she! The vanished

phantom come to life in the night! the cold white ashes risen from the dead! she! she!"

He regained his feet and stood up threatening the ghost that haunted him.

"Be it so!" he cried, in despair. "Be it so! If we are linked for life we shall go down to death together. I shall find you if you were concealed at the farthest corner of the earth. We made a compact, and I shall hold you to it. That agreement said that when one deceived the other, the knife should do its work. I shall meet you, and if you have betrayed me you shall die."

XXIII

A STILL HUNT

Jack Burroughs found Lasseville deserted. Both birds had flown and left no trace of their destination behind. He returned to Paris, resolved to get some news for Gabrielle, but weeks slipped by, and he was as much in the dark as ever. He wrote to her that he was working in her interest, but that he must deprive himself of the pleasure of calling on her until he had something to communicate. He received the daintiest, prettiest little note in reply that ever went through the mails. It urged him, in a sweet and gentle way, to call and see the count. She was sure her father would be very glad to see him, on his own account. Jack folded the note and put it in his coat-pocket, saying to himself it was too soon. A curious change was taking place in him, and it made him so uncomfortable that he preferred to be alone until he emerged from the strange and peculiar feeling. He was angry with Rose for the first time in his life.

It seemed to him that she had juggled with him, made light of him, and tossed him off for a new caprice. He did not know, but he felt assured she was an agent of some Italian conspirators, and had run away from him to carry out their designs. That notion was borne out by the name she had assumed, the eminence she had risen to, the wealth she enjoyed. There was something desperate and deadly behind it all, and it was his duty to wait and try to save her. He knew some of the men who lurked in dark corners, and watched her. He had seen them flit like shadows by him in the night. They had shown their displeasure at his presence, and made it plain that if he became troublesome, he would be removed. But Marcel Besnard had nothing to do with all that! He was a Frenchman, a mere secretary of the State Council, and in no way connected with the affairs of Italy.

Consequently, it was a mere fancy, a woman's whim, that pushed her to Marcel.

Jack was not jealous, he was indignant. He felt that he had been lowered, insulted, made little of by a woman he loved. He would find her, and get an explanation.

He would not judge her until he heard the facts. He knew her too well to place her in the category of other women. She was so impulsive, so fitful, so changeable, that no one but herself could give an excuse for her conduct.

Jack wondered at Marcel. He could not understand how a man could sacrifice such a home, and such a sister, for a woman like Rose.

He had made himself the scandal of the town, and almost killed the fragile flower in his father's home.

But Jack would unearth him if it was only for her sake, and endeavor to persuade him that he was throwing his life away.

He had heard that Marcel had gone flying over Europe in search of Rose, but he did not follow him, because he thought that Rose was concealed in Paris. She had flown from Las-seville with a strange man, and Jack put it down that her friends in Paris had demanded her presence there.

There was some plot on foot, and no doubt time would reveal it and Rose. He had only to wait. In the meantime he kept his eye on the Italians. He assumed all sorts of disguises to keep the Italians from recognizing

him, and he saw them go and come, day after day, as if they had nothing heavier on their minds than the cooking of the macaroni for dinner.

Marino and his associates, on their side, laughed at Jack's labors and disguises. He never changed his dress but they recognized him. His giant figure, broad shoulders, and slow, loping gait made him a distinct personage wherever he went, and Marino smiled when the great Englishman passed him, peering out of a pair of blue goggles.

One house at which all the Italians called, at one time or another, puzzled Jack.

He had made all sorts of inquiries concerning it, and could hear of nothing likely to draw them there.

There was not an Italian in the house, and only such women as worked for a living.

There was a man named Lazare, who appeared to be a small money-lender, but the conspirators could have no business with him; they were well supplied with money from Geneva at that period.

Jack made several efforts to hire a room in the house, but failed, and the housekeeper was rather short with him when he went there

to make inquiries. He sent men there to engage apartments, but they met the same fate as he.

They thought, with him, there was something peculiar about the place, and made up their minds to ascertain what it was.

All of a sudden M. Lazare left and the door-keeper became so polite they hardly knew him. The mystery thickened around Jack.

Lazare was somebody after all. Marino took his rooms when he moved, and the Italians continued to call, but another air surrounded the place; it lost its dark and secret tendency.

Jack was blocked at every point, and it seemed intentionally.

He was a man, however, who did not know when he was beaten, and so he kept on, as if nothing were in the way.

XXIV

A GREAT CHANGE

The year 1858 opened in Paris with a flourish of violins, and to the rhythm of polkas and country dances.

Fete followed fete in the official world, a very shamelessness of bureaucratic happiness reigned. There were balls in the Tuileries, and in the palaces of the ministers, balls also at the houses of the three presidents, and the prefects. Every evening there rose from the excited city a vast hodge-podge of pleasures, in which the rustling of silks tossed round in the waltz, risky sayings whispered in the ear, sonorous laughter bursting out from behind fans, and the thousand and one accompanying noises from streets, boulevards, restaurants and *cafes*. France in uniform never feasted so gayly, danced so much, supped so heartily, or loved so fiercely. All were given to gayety; life is so short and empires fall so quickly. But, while nimble Paris was jumping in the

tumult of delight to the music of the band, and the men squeezed the waists of the women decked out in violets, the existence of each member of the house in the Avenue Breteuil was monotonous and dull. Day succeeded day in that somber house the morrow as morose as yesterday.

An entire transformation had taken place in the character of Marcel Besnard.

The fashionable young man had disappeared and was replaced by a taciturn, almost savage being.

He no longer supped in the famous *cafes*, went to the theaters where he had the right of the stage, or stayed at the club, coquetting with the queen of spades. What had he done with himself, the Viscount Besnard, the favorite of the drawing-room, the conductor of the cotillons, for whom the mothers of families contended openly? He had become unsocial. He refused invitations, although they again began to pour in upon him, and hid himself from society.

He had not even deigned to go to the feast "Monday" of the Empress, a grave infraction of etiquette.

His father, disquieted and saddened,

reprimanded him gently once or twice, but Marcel's only reply was to shrug his shoulders. On the other hand, he was working like a beaver.

Thanks to his father's influence, his long absence from the Council of State was forgiven, and he resumed his old seat. After a long reprimand from the ever eloquent Baroche, the Viscount Besnard resumed his functions. At eleven o'clock every morning he went to the palace of Orsay to begin his duties for the day. When the sitting was over at night he was the last to leave the place, and always alone. Then he took the least frequented streets home. He stole along the quays until he came to the bridge of Jena where he crossed the Seine, and found himself in front of the Trocadero. That part of Paris at the time was a neighborhood to avoid. It suited Marcel on that account. He often gazed in the direction of Passy, where Rose had lived, and dreamed of his first visit there.

Suddenly he would rise, shake off the hallucination that weighed him down, and rush home, pale, distressed, out of breath.

The father shook his head sorrowfully when

he saw Marcel; Gabrielle wiped away the tears. He saw neither, and at the family table burst out now and again into sinister fits of laughter or remained completely silent, buried in dejection.

One evening, however, he crossed the desert of the Trocadero and walked along the bank of the Seine almost to the first cottages of Auteuil. Then going east he traversed these desolate quarters, rising the hill of Bonlainvilliers, and, when about a third of the way up, turned to the right. Before him opened a mysterious alley, bordered by country houses. He stopped, not knowing what arrested his footsteps; the beauty of the spot, its culture in the midst of neglect, its beauty in the heart of ugliness, perhaps, or the freshness of the perfume from the garden.

Almost in front of him was a deep, wide garden with a house in the style of Louis XVI in the distance.

He could not help looking at the house, it was so attractive, so new, so refreshing. In the dim twilight it looked deserted, but that might be because the inhabitants were in the rear. It was a large house, and capable of holding many people. At that hour, however,

there were no signs of life about it. Marcel gazed, and presently, seized with an uncontrollable desire to know whether the house was tenanted or not, rushed through the gate and up to the door. He pulled the bell and waited, but no person appeared in answer. He rang again and again, with the same result, and finally slunk away, believing that the house was the home of a miser who went to bed at sundown to save the expense of light. He turned his weary footsteps homeward, and frightened his father and sister by his unusually desperate appearance.

The next day Marcel went to the same house, and found it brilliantly lighted. He pulled the bell, and asked the servant who opened the door who lived there.

"The Baron La Chesnaye," replied the man, shutting the door in his face, thinking he was an escaped lunatic.

"La Chesnaye!" repeated Marcel to himself; "what can he be doing there? Has he sold his place in the Avenue, and what can he be doing with such a place as that? I shall call and see him."

XXV

THE MESSENGER OF M. LAZARE

When Marcel reached his own door that night he observed a man sitting on a step on the opposite side of the street. Snow and sleet were falling, it was bitterly cold, and Marcel wondered what the man could be doing there in such weather. His head was bent to save his face from the blinding storm, and his arched neck was covered with snow and sleet. "He must be some vagabond," thought Marcel, "out for a bad purpose, or a drunkard who is too sleepy to get any further."

The noise of the storm, beating on the sidewalk, prevented the man from hearing the viscount's step, but he no sooner stopped than the man raised his head and crossed the street. "Viscount!" he said, as he faced Marcel, and stood before him.

"Well, sir," returned Marcel, taking his night-key out of his pocket.

"This is the Viscount Besnard?"

"It is."

"I asked for you, sir, but they told me you were out, so I sat down over the way to await your return."

"Yes," replied Marcel, eyeing his man closely. They stood under the lamp of the house and Marcel was thus enabled to examine the new arrival at his leisure. He was a broad-shouldered, burly fellow of forty, with a heavy black beard, and hair that didn't feel a comb every day. He had a loose, swinging gait, and a sturdy, reliant manner that instantly conveyed the impression that he would be an ugly customer to handle. He was dressed in the costume of a professional porter, but it was easy to detect the disguise.

"Well, my man, what can I do for you?" said Marcel, assuming a jolly, good-natured manner he was far from feeling.

"I bring you a little souvenir, sir."

"A souvenir?" exclaimed Marcel, as much surprised as he could well be.

"Yes, a gift from M. Lazare."

"I don't know M. Lazare."

"No? Well, he knows you."

"He does?"

"Ah, yes."

"Are you quite sure?"

"You are Monsieur Marcel, Viscount Besnard?"

"I am."

"Then you are the gentleman."

Marcel continued to observe the man. He had seen the face before, but he could not recall where, or under what circumstances. He hunted his memory, but there was no name there answering for the person before him, nor anything more than a slight general recognition. He had met the man—there was no doubt of that—and under unpleasant circumstances, but where and when he could not even suggest. The heavy black beard and the masses of unbrushed hair were vivid in his mind, and the sinister sneer on the face was not to be forgotten, but Marcel was at sea about it all just then. He was a resident of the slums, that spoke for itself; he was accustomed to be out at night, and in all weathers, that was plain; Marcel must have seen him during one of his strolls along the river, or at the door of some all night cabaret in the exterior boulevards. He was a stranger. His accent denounced him at every word. He was either a Corsican or an Italian. As the

word Italian struck the mind of the young count he trembled from head to foot. A vague sense of alarm seized him. He was not afraid of the man but something in the meeting overpowered him.

"Won't you stand in out of the rain?" said Marcel, about to open the door.

The man got between him and the door.

The movement was so sudden and quick that it drove Marcel into the middle of the sidewalk.

"It is useless to go in, sir, you would have to come out again at once," said the man, respectfully.

"Ah!"

"Take some heart's-ease," said the man, holding out a candy box. "Take one!"

The romantic phrase was pronounced in such a tone, that it made Marcel shiver: "Heart's-ease."

Who then was this masquerader who divined his thoughts and feelings so accurately? Wondering what it all meant he stretched out his hand.

"I don't often relish practical jokes, my friend," said Marcel, "and I keep my cane ready for people of that class, who may inter-

cept me at inconvenient times. Now your box."

He took the box, and stood under the lamp. He tore off the paper, and came to a small box carefully sealed. He broke the seals with his knife, and opened the box. It contained a faded bouquet of wild roses. He started in surprise. His face became as white as the falling snow as he gazed, and the man in the shadow of the door almost grinned with malicious satisfaction.

Marcel did not dare to touch the little bouquet he held it in such veneration. It was not cold for him there in the street in the driving storm. The rain did not wet him, the wind pierce his clothing, or the snow and sleet have any effect on his boiling blood. The man in the doorway shrank up into himself and raised the collar of his coat about his ears.

"The rose of the mountain streams," thought Marcel, "the wild rose. The flower with which she decked herself, brought to me, here, now, at night, in the mystery and silence of the woods, where it lived, and I lived with her, whose emblem it was. She bore the same name, the same relation to the other flowers; both were queens of their kind." His

mind flew back to the days at Lasseville, and his uncontrollable love. It burst out anew as vigorous as ever, and showed that it was not dead, only slumbering. As he gazed into the box it seemed to him she had placed them there after kissing them, and they bore a message to him:

"Take these flowers, Marcel; your Rose has sent them to you. They are wild like her, and have her name. In the dismal hours of the night when loneliness and suffering come to you, look at them, and when you think that love has left your heart, they will inspire you to keep on loving. They are tender links binding hearts of gold, oaths of fealty and truth never to be broken but by death, death, death."

His heart was bitten anew by the old sting, and the vision that had risen before him became reality.

"Who sent me that?" he asked in a voice without sound or music in it.

"I already told you. M. Lazare."

"Where does M. Lazare live?"

"I came to bring you to him."

"What does he want with me?"

"He will tell you himself."

Marcel hesitated a moment, and added:

"No, not to-night, come to-morrow."

The man shook his head, and in a solemn tone replied: "To-morrow will be too late. M. Lazare is dying, and a terrible secret is weighing on his conscience."

"Ah! I begin to understand."

"No, you cannot—come, be quick."

Marcel still hesitated, and the man bent toward him, saying:

"He wants to speak to you of her."

Her! Her! At last! The madness of love was stronger than reason, or the elements, and Marcel, turning to the man, said: "Lead the way."

They started up the street, the man in advance, Marcel following. An empty carriage was passing the Esplanade as they reached that place. The man hailed it and both entered.

"Montmartre," said the man to the driver, "Place Saint Pierre, below Church Street."

When they were leaving the cab at the end of the journey a tall, athletic figure passed them on the other side of the street.

He recognized Marino in an instant, and the next detected Marcel.

He had been in that neighborhood for sev-

eral days in search for M. Lazare. He had no doubt now he had found him, but what connection was there between him and Viscount Besnard? Jack Burroughs meant to see.

XXVI

MONSIEUR LAZARE

"Here we are," said the man who had guided Marcel. "This is the house. Ask for the apartments of Signora Julia Nagri. M. Lazare lives there. I leave you here. My mission is ended. Good night."

He turned and went down the street. He had scarcely turned his back on Marcel than Jack Burroughs crossed to him. Marcel had rung the bell, and the door was opened. Jack passed in behind him, and accosted him. Marcel confronted Jack the moment he spoke and said: "Excuse me, I don't recognize you, and now—stop, I think I do."

"Burroughs of London."

"Oh, yes, to be sure. Beg your pardon! You came so suddenly on me that I was put out for the moment. Do you live in this house?"

"No, I was passing along the street on the other side and came over when I saw you."

"Well, I must ask you to excuse me to-night. I have an important engagement in this house, and don't know how long I may be detained, but I shall be glad to see you to-morrow."

"I want to see you to-night. It may be too late to-morrow. I shall wait here in the courtyard until you have finished with M. Lazare."

"Ah! you know where I am going?"

"I suspect. I know the man who conducted you here, and I believe him to be in league with this M. Lazare. Lazare lived not long since in another place and mysteriously disappeared. This man who came here with you used to visit him there, and then took his room. I have been looking for Lazare since, and have not succeeded in finding him, although I traced him to this neighborhood. I should probably not have been able to locate him but for you to-night. That explains my presence here. The man who accompanied you here is an Italian conspirator named Marino. He follows in the wake of a certain lady, and has direct relations with Lazare. Of course Lazare is an assumed name, the real one you will no doubt soon learn. What the inducements were that Marino

offered to induce you to come here I do not know, but they must be powerful to effect that purpose at this time of night."

Marcel listened attentively, while the porter stood at his window waiting to ascertain what he wanted.

All of a sudden a light broke in upon Marcel and he exclaimed: "No, you are mistaken; I remember now—the man's name is Traventi; he was one of the seconds of the Prince de Carpegna in the duel."

"Ah!"

"Yes. I recollect him now distinctly. I thought I knew the tangled mass of beard, and the unkempt hair. Besides, that Satanic smile could never be forgotten. I was very preoccupied at the moment, or I should have recognized him."

"There is something weighty afoot."

"You think so?"

"I am sure of it."

"I cannot be connected with it."

"Will you allow me to go up to M. Lazare's with you?"

"I hardly see how I can do that."

"Why not?"

"Well, I can't just exactly tell you now."

"I am a friend you met accidentally here, and that is good reason why you should allow me to go with you."

"I am not afraid."

"I do not insinuate that you are."

"I am in honor bound to see this man alone."

"Then I shall wait for you."

"You may do that."

Marcel went over to the porter, and asked for Madame Nagri. "Second floor," said the man.

"This gentleman is a friend of mine," he added, turning to Jack; "would you kindly let him stand in out of the rain until I come down?"

"Certainly; walk in, sir," replied the porter, saluting Jack.

Marcel went up to the second floor, and Jack stepped into the old man's lodge. He slipped a napoleon into his hand, and the man, surprised, looked up and thanked him.

Jack pulled out a long cigar, and lighted it, knowing full well if he kept silent the man would talk. He did.

"Your friend is a doctor, I suppose," he said; "well, I think it's too late for a doctor now. From what I have heard Madame Nagri say

the old gentleman is in the last stages. She does not expect him to go through the night—that's why they have sent for the physician. I suppose they have had several already, for there have been a great many gentlemen here, calling on the signora, since this old gentleman came to live with her, and some of them must have been doctors."

"Maybe they came on business," suggested Jack.

"Business!" cried the old porter, in amazement; "what business could a man like him carry on; in a house like this! No, indeed, nothing of that sort. I hardly saw him when he came, he was so muffled up, and there were so many round him, but I could make out that he was a dignified, exclusive man, and in no way connected with business. Business? Why, they bow and scrape before him as if he were a great minister, or lawyer, or judge, maybe—I have seen how they entered the room and came out as I went up and down the stairs. Once I heard Madame de Nagri let slip the word 'Prince' and another time she called him 'Monsignor.' She tried to cover it up, but not before I saw she had betrayed herself. My wife knows more than I

do, but she won't tell. That is, she won't tell me; she'd tell you and welcome, you could not stop her. It's different with me. I'm not given to talking. You're English—yes, I can see that—you English don't talk much. I'm like you, but the French they hand everything out. I don't. I keep things to myself; only when I see people trying to hide things I think it is my duty to find them out. What am I given an intelligence for if not to use it? Just so. I hate talkers, mere talkers, they are such a nuisance. That's one of the reasons why Gertrude and I get along so badly. She talks so much and blames it on me. I married the wrong woman, sir, I did, indeed, and I have been regretting it ever since. Another man married the right one, and then she went wrong. But such is life. We have not had a death in the house for ten years. I don't like death, and I don't like it in the house. The landlord does not like it either. It makes the tenants uneasy. We have nothing here but young people, mostly working people, but young and gay. I am not young myself, but I am lively. Gertrude pretends that I am too friendly with the young women, but that's her spite. If the girls like to talk to me, that is

not my fault. I have to listen, and I do."

The old fellow rattled on, but Jack was not paying attention to him. He was thinking of the "prince" and the "monsignor" and wondering what it could mean. This monsignor, this prince, had assumed the name of Lazare for some purpose; what was that purpose? What prince was he? The Prince de Carpegna? And Jack almost bounded from his seat at the idea. No, that could not be. He was killed in the duel; but after all, suppose he were not killed in the duel, but feigned death. Lazare—the name translated itself at once in Jack's mind—Lazarus, risen from the dead. "That's it," he thought. "The fellow played a trick, and is going to play another of the same kind. He will die to-night, and lead this young man into some trap. But—why? What has this young Frenchman to do with their Italian plots, and how can he subserve them? She is an accomplice. She whom I loved, she whom I adored, she for whom I would have lain down my life—she left me coldly, brutally to take up with these men, and her mission was a mission of blood." He shuddered, and the image of a pale, lame girl came into his mind with refreshing sweetness.

Marcel pulled the bell at the door on the second floor, and a female voice inside asked: "Whom do you want?"

"Signora Nagri," replied Marcel.

"It is I," said an old lady, opening the door a little; "what do you wish at this late hour?"

"Can I see M. Lazare?"

"See him!" exclaimed the woman, and she clasped her hands; "the good God will soon see him."

She stopped and listened.

"He is calling, I think—wait, I shall be back in a moment."

She closed the door, leaving Marcel in the dark corridor.

A vague terror, mixed with shame, gained on him little by little. "What! Was he going to be a witness of this man's death, maybe his agony? No, what an indignity!"

He felt like running away, but something stayed him. Some unknown power held him. There in the dark he felt that mysterious swaying force that had so often held him before, and he could not move.

"I must remain," he said to himself. "If by chance this dying man possesses a secret—a secret, it may be, on which my repose and life

depend—I must hear it, know it, act on it. He sent for me—I am here; I shall stay.”

At last the old lady returned, opened the door carefully, and made a sign for him to enter.

“You are welcome, sir,” she said; “come in. The old man insists on seeing you. Ah! he is going rapidly, the dear, sweet old man?”

And then by word, gesture, and the whole expression of her body, all her Italian mimicry, said at once, “Mr. Lazare is dying fast.”

She conducted Marcel to the parlor of the apartment, opened the door for him, and discreetly stood aside while he went in.

The opening of the door aroused a figure reclining in an easy chair, and without rising the man called out in a feeble voice: “Come in, viscount, come in, and welcome.”

Marcel walked straight to the man, looked at him, and stepped back in amazement.

“You?” he cried.

He had recognized the Prince de Carpegna.

An almost imperceptible smile passed over the face of the man in the chair.

“I!” said he; “I’m—excuse me rising—I’m dying. Take a chair. This time I am going. I changed my mind when last you

saw me, and concluded I would stay a bit. This is almost as pleasant a meeting as our last, is it not? You come here and find a man dead a year, just come out of the tomb—eh! Lazarus woke up and—the Prince de Carpegna stepped out of the sepulcher. Like a pantomime, isn't it. Better though, for it is real. Sit down, sir, sit down. We must have a little chat together; we have lots of things to talk about, you and I. It is a year since we met; many extraordinary events have transpired in that year. Good, that's right; now you are more at ease. *Misericordi!* you look at me as frightened as was Don Juan before the statue of the Commander."

He was taken with a cough and a fit of suffocation very painful to witness. He put his hand out toward a glass on a small table near him and drank a few mouthfuls of the medicine it contained.

"This is what they call 'the health of the dying,'" he said, holding up the glass before him, and then turning his white face to Marcel. "It is made from a Milanese recipe, and is an admirable discovery of the great Verga. Would you like to taste it? No? Well," and he set down the glass. He smiled again, the

same silent, stealthy, deadly smile, that was like a ripple of hate rolling over his blanched lips, and crossed his hands in his lap.

“Youth has no sympathy with the dying or death; why should it? Young life is its life, decay its bane. I hope you will excuse my sending for you, and, above all, bringing you to this poor place. I could not find another so suitable in every respect. The worthy woman who gave me a resting place here is a brave and courageous creature, once in a high position—she is a compatriot, devoted—as we are all—to the cause of our unhappy Italy. Yes, my good Julia,” he continued, turning to the old lady, “we shall continue leaving our bones in every clime on earth free enough to grant us an exile, but the grateful winds shall carry our souls to our native land; and there the well-beloved sons that have taken our place shall breathe us, and be inspired to noble efforts for freedom. With our love for Italy they imbibe our hate for her enemies and those who have injured her and betrayed her, and they will carry on the work of revenge while we are sleeping in foreign graves.”

The old lady was weeping, and the prince once more addressed Marcel, who deemed the

burst of patriotism in the prince quite natural under the circumstances.

"You will excuse my little burst of eloquence, viscount, and you may understand it although you are a Parisian. Where was I? Oh! yes. The Prince de Carpegna could not receive you in a palace here in Paris though he might in Ravenna. Besides, he is now in concealment, or rather dead, but will be in reality dead tomorrow. I found it convenient to die after the duel; no use explaining why; it would not interest you, and had for a cause matters wholly foreign to you. I am now M. Lazare, and as M. Lazare I say you are welcome."

"Thank you," blurted out Marcel.

The old man paused, gazed around, and whispered:

"Our lovely Rose is in Paris. Do you want to see her?"

Marcel could not conceal his surprise, but did not speak. The coolness with which this husband spoke of his wife appalled him.

"Oh! I comprehend," continued the old man. "I can read even to the bottom of your heart. You say to yourself, 'This Prince de Carpegna is an infamous old wretch, and a cynical gamester.' You are wrong, sir; my honor,

such as I regard it, is as fair as yours. As to my morals, I care little as to what may be thought of them here. Besides, I did not disturb you too soon; and I would have willingly waited longer; but death, with which I have already played, will not await me. It is drawing me on, it is choking me—the result of certain wounds you know of—and I cannot ward it off. You are a fine hand with the pistol, viscount; I wish you had one with you and would finish your work. It would put me out of pain, save me a great deal of suffering. Oh! what anguish you have caused me! In return I wish to do good for evil. I don't blame you, mind. It was all fair and honorable, although the result has been bitter to me. It might have been the other way. I am glad now I fired in the air. I acted on impulse, I have all my life, and a man who does rarely regrets it. The heart is always right. It is only the head that goes wrong. I could not coolly take a young life. I am a passably good hand with the pistol, too; at least I was. Have you got a coin? No. Julia, get me that long pistol in the box in the library and a copper coin; see if you have an English penny. I may be too far gone, viscount, and have lost

the steadiness of nerve and arm, but it's no harm to try. Don't be alarmed, sir. I fired my shot, I am not going to send a second in the same direction."

The old woman brought the pistol and the prince requested her to throw up the coin. She did so, and he hit it with the same ease he would have hit an elephant. He bowed to Madame Nagri and handed her back the weapon.

"The hand is steady, still, sir. I would hardly have believed it. Well, sir, I did not send for you to give an exhibition of my skill, but before expiring I wished to make one man happy, and that man is you. I repeat then our lovely Rose is here in Paris; say, do you wish to see her?"

The prince was seized with another coughing spell, and again sought the preparation of the great Verga. He recovered and with his eye concentrated on Marcel, who was too thunderstruck to speak, he went on:

"What a charming woman she is. A goddess! Eyes of Venus and the head and hair of Juno! Alert in intellect, turning a madrigal like Dechonliers, and writing prose like Sevigne. Did she exercise those talents much

for you, or did she confine herself to blank verse? A great genius but poor, very poor, like all the great talents. Who is paying her expenses now? It is not I—no, indeed, I assure you of that. Is it you? It must be, of course. Excuse me, don't pull your glove like that,—an act of violence to a dying man would be an outrage, and you are a gentleman. At least, I hope so. But tell me who is keeping Rose at this moment?"

Each word was pronounced in a low voice, with frequent interruptions of coughing, of quasi-suffocations, long pauses, sinister, soundless laughter; it was hideous.

Marcel was on a gridiron, but he could not have stirred if his bones were being torn apart on a rack. There was a fascination about the devilish work of the old fiend before him that held him spellbound, and he could neither move nor speak. He felt like jumping on the old viper, and trampling the life out of him, and yet he feared he might lose something there was to tell. So he waited, determined to hear it all out. The prince seemed to sink and fade, and be compelled to seek the assistance of the Milanese remedy oftener and oftener, but finally nerving himself for a su-

preme effort, he drank some brandy and massed all his energy, as if to deliver a last assault.

"For my own part," he said, "for the past year I have been dead to everyone. The ignominy of my widow could not reach me in the tomb where I was believed to be resting. You follow me?"

Marcel nodded his head.

"My honor as a husband was thus safe. But, you, sir, who had been the public lover of that woman!—you, who before all Paris, ran off, and went to live with her, and wanted to marry her—you, from whom she ran away—you who are dying from her abandonment! What are you going to do?"

Marcel rose, trembling in every nerve, and paced the room.

"Well, sir."

"Enough! I will hear no more!"

"Oh! you will hear no more! But you must hear some more. You must hear it all, every word if I shall be allowed the time to repeat it. My young friend, you do not seem to understand. You are plodding along in the Council of State, the ridicule of all Paris. Ha! Ha! Ha! While, poor fool, you were flying all over Europe in search of her, she was living

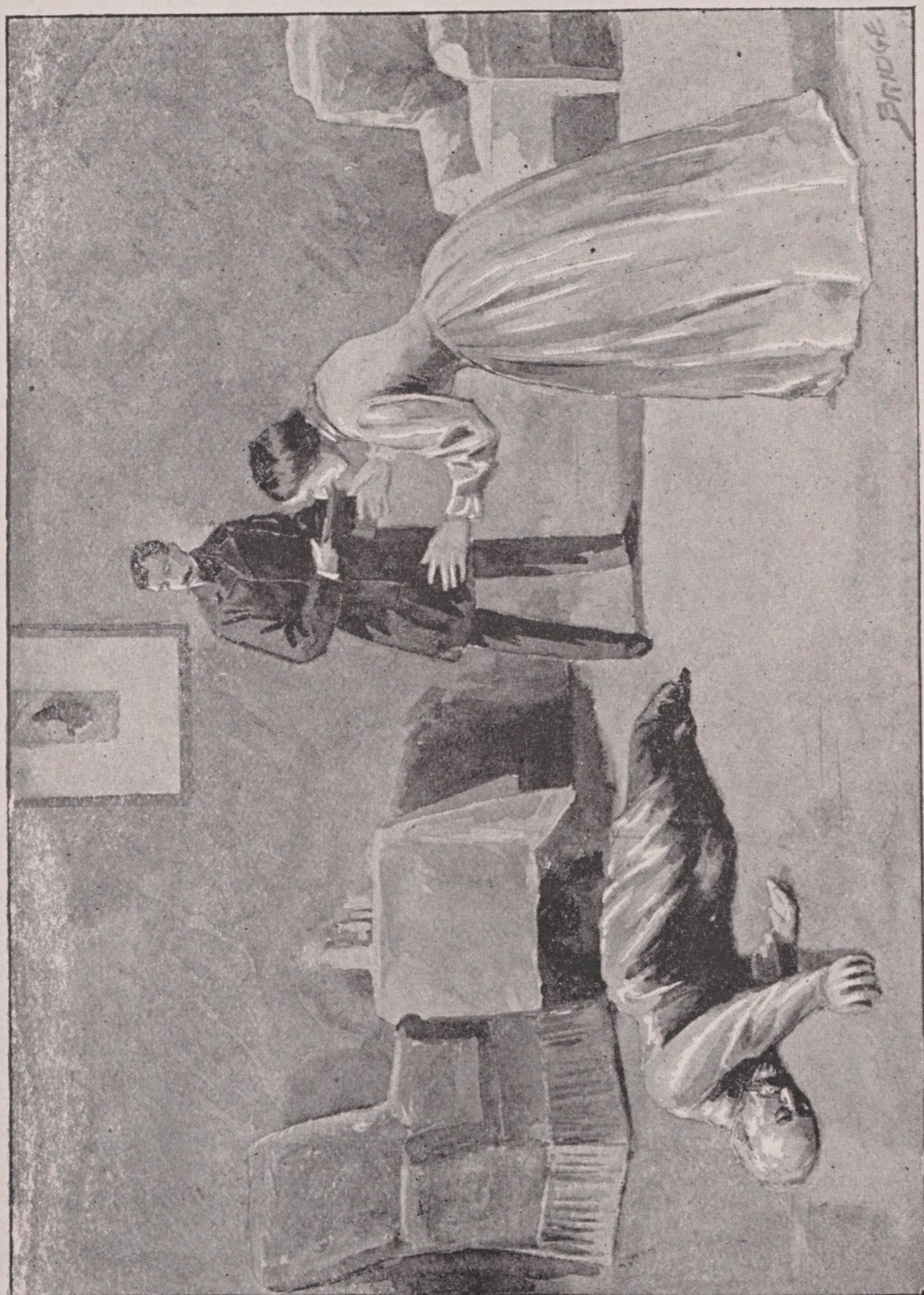
comfortably here in Paris with another—a new lover.

“His name?”

“Ah! you must find that out for yourself, my dear young friend. How they must mock and laugh at you. You don’t go to the clubs now, or you would hear what jokes the young men made at your expense. Ah! you don’t wish to hear any more, you don’t want to understand. But, at this very instant, while I am talking to you, they are together. She is probably leaning her head on his shoulder, and his arm is caressing her waist. You know what a lovely, loving way she has of resting that classic head on your shoulder! Ah! God! how happy I was when I used to see and feel it here,” and he laid his bony hand on his shoulder, “and yet she went and pillowed it on yours with as much show of affection.”

“Enough! Enough! The name of this man?”

“How she could recite, and act, and sing, and play, a veritable queen of all the arts. She was, indeed a prima donna of the slums. Another now supports that head, rains kisses on those lips, that hair, that head, listens to the rapturous music of her voice, or counts the palpitations of her heart.”



THE OLD MAN FELL ON THE FLOOR.

"Who is the man? Quick! or I shall do the tardy work of death!"

"How pale you are, dear viscount! Tell me, do you still refuse to see her? Are you afraid of the man?"

Marcel rushed over and took him with both hands, completely lifting him out of the chair. "You miserable wretch! you are well worthy of your country! Not daring to strike yourself, you want to incite another to do it. I am ready; it is all one to me. His name! His name!"

"They are together to-night! Do you hear? To-night—together—in the big house on the left of the alley above the Champs de Mars."

"I know! I know!"

"Go! Run! Run! But be armed! Here, take that!" and he handed him the pistol; the viscount knocked it out of his hand. The old man looked at him, and laughed the same hard, cold laugh, coughed, suffocated, and fell on the floor. Madame Nagri rushed over to him and cried out, "He is dead!"

"So much the better," returned Marcel, and he strode out of the apartment.

XXVII

A DISMAL NIGHT

He had forgotten all about Jack, and only remembered when he saw him in the porter's lodge.

He just nodded to him, and they passed out in company. "You will excuse me to-night, if you please," said Marcel, "I shall be glad to see you to-morrow."

"That won't do," replied Jack. "What I have to say to you must be said to-night. To-morrow would be too late."

"I have something to do yet to-night; it is late now and I am pressed for time."

"It is only just ten; here is a *cafe*, let us go in. I won't take long. You have been a good while with the prince."

"Ah! you know?"

"I do. He is dead?"

"Yes, I saw him fall dead on the floor. The old woman pronounced him gone. I did not wait to lift him up."

"You were right. I hope he is dead, but I doubt it."

"I think there is no doubt about it this time."

"Well, so much the better."

Jack was a good deal surprised at Marcel's coolness. He thought it strange, as the prince must certainly have said something about Rose. He made no remark about it, however, contenting himself with waiting for developments.

"I should like to go back and watch that house to-night," said Jack, "and was going to ask you to go with me only you are in such a hurry."

"Why so? What can there be about that house to render it so interesting?"

"Let us go and see."

"No, I can do nothing to-night."

"Whatever you have in mind may be affected by what goes on in that house to-night."

"It would not."

"You are sure of that?"

"Quite sure."

"Then I shall go alone."

"Will you allow me to ask you a question?"

"Certainly. I am here to give you information."

"You are an Englishman, and a lawyer, why do you mix yourself up with these Italians?"

"That is a leading question, and one I came here to answer. It is better perhaps you put it that way. It enables me to begin at the beginning, and relate the whole story. You may interrupt where you like, only be ready for surprises, and remember it all occurred previous to your entrance on the scene."

"Yes," growing very white, and trembling in spite of his coolness and effort to keep down excitement.

"Some five years ago when I was starting as a young barrister in London I made the acquaintance of a girl who used to go around the streets singing with a band of Italian musicians. She was very beautiful, had a glorious voice and dressed in a sort of semi-stage costume. I gave her a shilling and a crown when I had one, took her to dinner in my rooms, and finally she became my mistress."

"You lie!" cried Marcel, jumping to his feet. "That is—I beg your pardon—Go on—never mind. I did not mean it;" reseating himself.

"Don't indulge in that sort of thing," said Jack; "for in the first place I don't like it, and

in the next it will cause a disturbance here. I speak the truth, and am speaking it because I promised one most dear to you and—well, no matter—that I should do all in my power to bring you to reason. It is no more pleasant to me to tell all this than it is for you to hear it.”

“Who is the person for whom you are making this sacrifice?”

“I won’t name her here.”

“Will you outside?”

“Yes.”

“Well, I won’t interrupt you again.”

“One night my mistress came to me and said, ‘Jack, I am going to leave you.’ I had grown to love her deeply, and was stunned. She seemed to love me, and cut up a good deal about going, but the next day she was gone. I searched London pretty thoroughly for her, and all I could learn from her old companions about her was that she had met some gentlemen and had gone away. She went by the name of Rose. In fact, that is her name; and since I have been in Paris I have learned that her other name is Lavetti.”

“Lavetti?” exclaimed Marcel.

“Yes. She is the daughter of Scipione

Lavetti, an Italian patriot murdered by a Frenchman."

"My father!" and the viscount dropped his head on his hands on the table.

"Ah! that explains it all. I could not understand why the prince provoked you to a duel, and she eloped with you, but it is all plain now. It was a plan to ruin you and your family."

"They succeeded."

"I hope not."

"They have! They have!"

"We shall beat them yet."

"You don't know what you say!"

"I heard that Rose was in Paris and I came over. She returned to me for a night, and then fled with you. I loved her then; I think now she ought to be punished. At all events, warned now, I beg of you to go home, and endeavor to quiet your father and sister on your absence. I will return to that house, and let you know to-morrow how matters stand."

"Thank you," said Marcel rising.

They parted at the door, Jack going back toward the house in Church Street, Marcel in the other direction. He wondered at the

athletic Englishman, and the easy, undisturbed way he talked of love. He smiled and thought, "They never love."

He went on his course, and his face assumed a stolid, fateful look that boded no good to Rose.

Jack got to the house, but he was too late. A body that had been purchased at the morgue during the afternoon, under pretense that it was for a medical clinic, was brought into the room during the day. It was laid on M. Lazare's bed; and Signora Nagri was armed with a doctor's certificate in due form.

As soon as Marcel left the place the prince jumped to his feet, and began to robe himself suitably for the night and a journey.

Marcel and Jack had only disappeared when Marino returned with a dozen friends. The doctor had informed them that M. Lazare was dead. While he was saying that to the porter the others passed up stairs. They did not stay long, and when they descended the prince was among them, one of the most alert. They left the house, and Paris that night by different trains. They were gone when Jack put in his second appearance.

Madame Nagri went with her sacred charge the next day to have it interred at Ravenna.

XXVIII

THE MYSTERIOUS HOUSE

Marcel walked rapidly at first, and then slackened his pace. His head was bent, not so much to escape the blinding rain as in thought. It seemed to him the Prince de Carpegna was beside him. When he reached the exterior boulevard he sank on a bench by a tree and rested. "Lavetti?" he said; "the daughter of Scipione Lavetti—and she came like a serpent to wind herself round my heart and sting me to death. Yes, I am dead. She shall die, too, but not the death I have suffered, she shall die by my hand. She made the compact. It shall be kept."

Just then he thought he heard the laughter of the husband, the cough and the rattle in his throat. He heard him hiss, "They are together to-night, to-night," and urge him on to slay them. "La Chesnaye, an old idiot, who had been his second; he deserved his

fate. They are now in that house, at this moment, and I am dawdling here."

He stood up, and went on. Descending the quarter of the Martyrs, he soon reached the Faubourg Montmartre, and Le Peletier Street. The neighborhood was crowded with people. There was a masked ball in progress in the old Opera House, and young people in masks, dominos and fancy costumes, were moving about in all directions. All the little stores in the opera arcade were open. Marcel went into an armorer's up near the theater, and bought a pistol. He had it charged, and put it in his pocket. He then went out on the boulevard, jumped into a cab and was driven to within a few yards of the mouth of the alley.

Notwithstanding the advanced hour and the biting cold, the slope of the Bonlainvilliers hill was not so deserted as ordinarily.

Here and there human figures went and came like shadows in the night. A little below the angle of the alley a carriage stood beside a hedge, almost imperceptible. It was a coupe, and the lamps were out. Marcel stooped, looked at the panel of the door, and saw it bore an "L."

"La Chesnaye!" he said to himself. "He is here."

The blood bounded into his head, which, up to that moment, was cool and collected, he trembled with anger, and grasping the handle of the pistol in his pocket, he dashed up the alley. The storm lightened; only a few flakes of snow seemed to dance in space, but, on the narrow thoroughfare, the snow and the ice melted together, and formed a heavy, muddy swamp. It was hard to walk in it. The alley was as black as pitch, though every once in a while flashes of moonlight swept across it. An ominous silence reigned around. When Marcel approached the house he noticed that it appeared to be shut up. Streaks of light, however, were noticeable through the blinds on every floor.

They were there.

Marcel crept along under cover of the hedge for fear of coming in contact with one of the ghostly figures moving here and there in the darkness. He slipped over the fence, got into the garden, and crouched beneath a tree. At that moment a sudden burst of moonlight showed him two men approaching from the other end of the garden. They had evidently

seen him. He rose and started to run, they dashed forward at full speed toward him.

"Damnation! they have seen me! Bah! It's too late," he cried to himself; "one effort, and I may defeat them." He dashed to the left to deceive his pursuers and the moon became covered again with thick clouds. He suddenly shifted his course, and made straight across the lawn. He reached the veranda and was sheltered by its overhanging roof. The blinds of the lower windows were closed, and behind them two persons were talking in low, soft accents. In the pauses they were perhaps kissing, and Marcel went almost mad.

In an access of rage Marcel tore the outer fastenings from the blinds, and they gave way. The inside locks had been forgotten. The noise alarmed those in the room and Marcel heard a cry he only too well recognized. The light was suddenly put out, and darkness succeeded. Marcel threw himself against the high deep window with all his force and it yielded. He dashed into the room. He stood a moment, looking all around, trying to discern some object, but could see nothing—suddenly by a light being carried up the stairway outside, and which illuminated part

of the room through the window over the door, he saw a figure stealing across the room on tiptoe and endeavoring to escape through the adjoining apartment. Marcel pulled out his weapon and fired. In an instant he was seized and thrown on the floor. A woman's shriek pierced the night air, and then all was still as death. Two heavy knees were placed on Marcel's chest and the pistol taken away from him. He remained as he had been thrown and made no effort to escape. Confused murmurs and the rushing of feet were heard in the house, with stifled exclamations—a silent tumult. Then the front door opened, a carriage drove up and an instant later drove away. A man's voice was raised clear and distinct—it was La Chesnaye.

“Don't be uneasy, gentlemen,” he said, “the Emperor is not wounded.”

“The Emperor!” exclaimed Marcel on the floor.

The lights were turned up, the house illuminated, the police entered with torches. Before them walked the Princess de Carpegna, her hair disheveled, her night dress in disorder, pale, trembling, shoeless. She went over to the man they were still holding on

the floor, and when she saw who it was she burst into a sinister fit of laughter.

"The viscount!" she exclaimed; "why, what a curious thing for him to do!"

"Away with him!" she cried, waving her arm with a majestic movement to the police.

"He is worthy of his father!"

XXIX

VERY URGENT

Paris woke on Friday morning, January 15, 1858, to learn that Orsini had made an attempt on the life of the Emperor. The news was slow in spreading, for some reason, and was not known in some districts until quite close to noon. It was about nine o'clock when old Philomene brought the Count Besnard his morning paper; two letters and some packages.

The count was dressed, and ready to go to church as usual with his daughter. He appeared to be suffering more than on the previous day. The doctor had said that he was not to be annoyed or disturbed, and that he needed absolute calm.

Calm! and the count was devoured by inquietude for his son. He had not seen him for forty-eight hours and could not think what had become of him.

He left the Council of State at the usual

hour on Wednesday, and no one had seen him since.

When the old servant entered the room Gabrielle ran to her, and took the letters and papers out of her hands.

She looked at the letters and dropped them hurriedly, for there was not one from Marcel. They were official letters, and she was not interested in them. One had the stamp of the Council of State, the other the letters P. O., and the words, "very urgent;" she handed them to her father. The count took one of the letters without a word, and broke the seal. It was a notice of meeting written in a curious style and pressing:

"Sir and dear colleague:—By decision of the S. E. M., the minister, president of the Council of State, the council will meet to-day in general assembly extraordinary, at three o'clock. You are invited to attend the sitting. The object will be important communications, and the reading of an address to his Majesty the Emperor.

BAILAY."

"What can be the matter?" said the old man, surprised at the unusual formalities.

He tore off the band enclosing his morning

paper, and glanced over it. His eye encountered the news of the Orsini affair and he cried:

"Another attempt! The scoundrels."

Then trembling visibly, and for the moment neglecting the second letter, he opened the journal, and read in a loud voice:

"At half past eight o'clock last night, as their Majesties, the Emperor and Empress, arrived at the Opera House, three explosions of projectiles were heard. A number of persons standing in front of the theater were injured, many fatally.

"Their Majesties escaped.

"An investigation was at once begun and several persons were arrested."

The count threw down the paper, and walked the room in a highly nervous condition.

"This is abominable!" he cried; "abominable! And now these ministers, frightened out of their miserable lives, are going to try and pass exceptional laws, looking to their own safety. I shall oppose them. Where were they when their master was attacked? At their pleasures!"

"Oh! father," supplicated Gabrielle, "think

of your health, for our sakes, for mine, for Marcel's."

The old man motioned her back with a wave of the hand, and continued his march. It calmed him finally, and he went over and sat at the table near his daughter. His eyes fell on the second letter, which he had forgotten in his excitement. He took it up and opened it. "Ha! Ha!" he said; "a note from the minister of state, the most cynical corrupter of the government; my minister, and, furthermore, my personal enemy. 'By order,' and 'very urgent.' My goodness! what an amount of business all in one morning! Why does he honor me with his prose!"

He tore open the envelope, and his face expressed the most intense surprise.

"What is this enigma!" he asked. "Help me to understand it, child; listen!" and he read:

"COUNT:—His excellency the minister of state prays you to come without delay to his office for an object of the highest gravity, and which concerns you. If you will kindly come on the reception of this the minister will be obliged. He will wait for you until eleven o'clock.
BARON EPHRAIM COHEN."

"An object of the highest gravity concerning you," repeated the count, and his hands trembled.

"I don't understand!"

"Nor I, father," said Gabrielle.

"What is this mystery? What does he want me for—this man, with his language of a potentate?"

He rang for the carriage.

"Well, I will go and see. Don't expect me back before evening."

He kissed his daughter on the forehead and said:

"Go to Saint Vallery, my child. Pray to Almighty God for us all. For me, him—him who is absent and we know not where. Ask Him to be merciful to us all. He will listen to you."

XXX

BAD NEWS

The servant announced the carriage, and the count was putting on his overcoat when the front door-bell rang.

"Who can that be," said the count, "at this hour? Maybe some news from my son."

A servant knocked and Gabrielle went to see what he wanted. He brought a card on a salver. "For the count," said the man.

The old man took the card, and read: "John Algernon Burroughs. An Englishman. I don't know any such person."

"Oh! yes, you do, papa. You remember Mrs. Burroughs and her daughter Maude in London."

"Oh! yes, to be sure, and I remember now I was introduced to a tall young man. I am sorry, but I can't see him now. Go down, my child, and explain to him that I am ailing this morning, and that I am going out on most

important business, though I have not the least notion in the world what it is."

Gabrielle flew down the stairs, and the count continued his dressing.

She was back again in an instant, and said:

"He says he must see you. His business is important, and he can do nothing until he sees you."

"Everybody has important business with me this morning, it appears. Bring him up."

Gabrielle went down for Jack, and the count resumed his chair, overcoat and all. Jack entered bowing, and excused himself.

He stopped dead short in the middle of the room.

"You want to see me alone?"

"If you please."

Gabrielle went out. "Now, sir," said the count.

"I was coming down a street on Montmartre last night," said Jack, "and saw two men on the other side of the way. I was attracted by the appearance of one whom I thought I recognized. When I got a good look at him, he turned out to be the man I was searching for, and with him was your son."

"You had better be seated."

"Thanks. It was very dark and raining hard, snowing too, and sleeting, and the man left your son at the front door of a large house in Church Street. I went over and spoke to the viscount when he was alone, and he told me he was going in there to see a M. Lazare. Now I had been hunting this Lazare, and was in that neighborhood on that account. I requested your son to allow me to accompany him to Lazare's room, but he refused. He did not know him, mind you. He was going there at the invitation of the man I had seen with him, and the motive used, I suppose, was a certain woman. I waited with the porter, and from him I learned that Lazare was the Prince de Carpegna."

"Great God! He was not killed then!"

"No. But it was announced that he was dying as Lazare. I met your son when he came out, and he told me that Lazare was the Prince de Carpegna. This time the prince was dead. He saw him die. I doubted it. But he was sure. I was afraid they were trying to lead him into some dangerous scheme, and I wanted to inform him who those people were."

"The Prince de Carpegna and his associates? Who were they?"

"A band of Italian cut-throats calling themselves patriots."

"God of heaven! And the woman?"

"Was their tool. She had been a street singer in London, and was called the prima donna of the slums when Carpegna and those men took her up to carry out their plans of vengeance. I told the viscount that, but I doubt if he believed me. I assured him I knew a man whose mistress she had been in London and he became enraged. He cooled down finally and I told him the woman's name was Lavetti."

"Lavetti?"

"Yes, Rose Lavetti. She was the daughter of Scipione Lavetti who had been killed in the Midi by a Frenchman."

"I!"

"You, count?"

"Yes."

"My God! I see it all. It was you they sought to reach through him, and they chose for an instrument the daughter of the man—"

"I had killed; yes, sir."

"Infamous! There is no time to be lost. Those men have done something and fled. I can't find the viscount anywhere. I asked for

him when I came here, and was informed that he was out. I then asked for you. On leaving him on Wednesday night I went back to the house in Church Street. I managed to get upstairs to the apartment in which M. Lazare was said to have died. An old Italian woman was there in charge, but in the meantime a number of men had called and left. I requested to see the corpse and when I touched it I discovered it had been dead at the least two days. M. Lazare then had only pretended to expire, and had left the house with his countrymen afterward. They have apparently left the city, with the exception of those who took part in the Orsini affair. I beg of you now, count, to put the whole machinery of the government to find Marcel, for he is in danger somewhere."

"I am going to the Council of State, sir, and will do as you say, even if it becomes necessary to invoke the assistance of the Emperor."

"If anything should happen, count, I hope that your daughter will believe my family will always be glad to provide a home for her."

The count looked at Jack a moment, then rose and shook his hand.

"I understand you, sir," he said, "and the fact will make my death the easier. You will find her in the next room. Explain all this the best you can without alarming her. Good day."

"Good morning."

The count went downstairs with a heavy tread, endeavoring to conceal his feelings, but they broke out in the carriage, and he almost fainted.

Gabrielle saw him to the door, and then went back to Jack. He told her a long story about Marcel, and brought it out that he was all safe and sound. He then touched on personal matters, and finally acknowledged that he had asked the count for her hand, and that it had been promised to him in case calamity befell the family.

Gabrielle hid her blushes on the breast of the giant in the chair and wept, she was so happy. He felt proud that such a fragile, pretty flower was all his own and glad that she was lame so that he could carry her about the oftener in his arms. Her helplessness appealed to his nobility of soul, and he loved her more on account of that defect.

It was late in the afternoon when he left the house and before he went away an ar-

rangement was reached that word was to be sent to him the instant Marcel came home or any news of him was received.

XXXI

THE MINISTER OF STATE

When the Count Besnard entered the office of the minister of state the Palais-Royal clock struck ten. The ante-chambers were already filled by a waiting crowd.

The count handed his card to the man at the door, and a moment later he was ushered into the presence of the great man.

"Be good enough to take a seat," said the minister, and the old count sat down, shocked and hurt at his reception.

"Your excellency sent for me," said the old man in a dry tone, "what may you want with me?"

No reply. The minister was seated in a large chair, apparently reflecting. He was puzzled, annoyed and looked as if he did not know how to begin. At last he said:

"Yes, I sent for you, my dear Count Besnard, and I was sorry to be compelled to do

so—ah! heaven, what an abominable enterprise!”

The language, the manner, the tone, each offended the old count, and he was getting angry.

“Abominable enterprise! Why, certainly! Still —pardon me—these enterprises become too frequent. People ought to watch better, and provide measures of safety.”

“People—you mean me—that is—the government?”

He raised his head, and with a sinister, cutting smile looked at the old count, all his hate gathered in the look.

“A lesson, count; ah! please spare us the reading of a lesson this morning. But, stay, first of all, whom are you speaking about—the criminals of last evening? These bandits of the street? They are all in prison. I was alluding to another culprit. To Marcel Bernard, your son.”

“My son! What has the name of my son to do with all this?”

“Your son made an attempt to assassinate the Emperor!”

“My son! my son!”

The old man rose, and held on by the chair.

"I don't understand you. You say—no, no, I cannot understand you."

After a little he shrugged his shoulders and resumed his seat, a disdainful smile on his white face.

"Your excellency has been the dupe of some carnival folly. An infamous practical joke."

"I do not wish to bandy any more words with you, count, so I will therefore read you the report of the chief of police:

"During the night of the 12th and 13th of January, the day before yesterday, Marcel Besnard attempted to assassinate the Emperor at the house of a certain woman known as the Princess de Carpegna."

"The Princess de Carpegna!" repeated the old man, putting his hands to his face. He became livid. His heart beat violently and gave him great pain. The muscles tightened at the throat and he could only utter one word, "Absurd!"

The minister did not even appear to remark the torture of the count and went on:

"Absurd! I agree with you. True, however, very much too true. You may read, if you like, the preliminary examination."

He took the testimony from his bureau, and handed it to the old count, who pushed it roughly away from him.

"No, no, that would be useless. The man is not my son. It is not he."

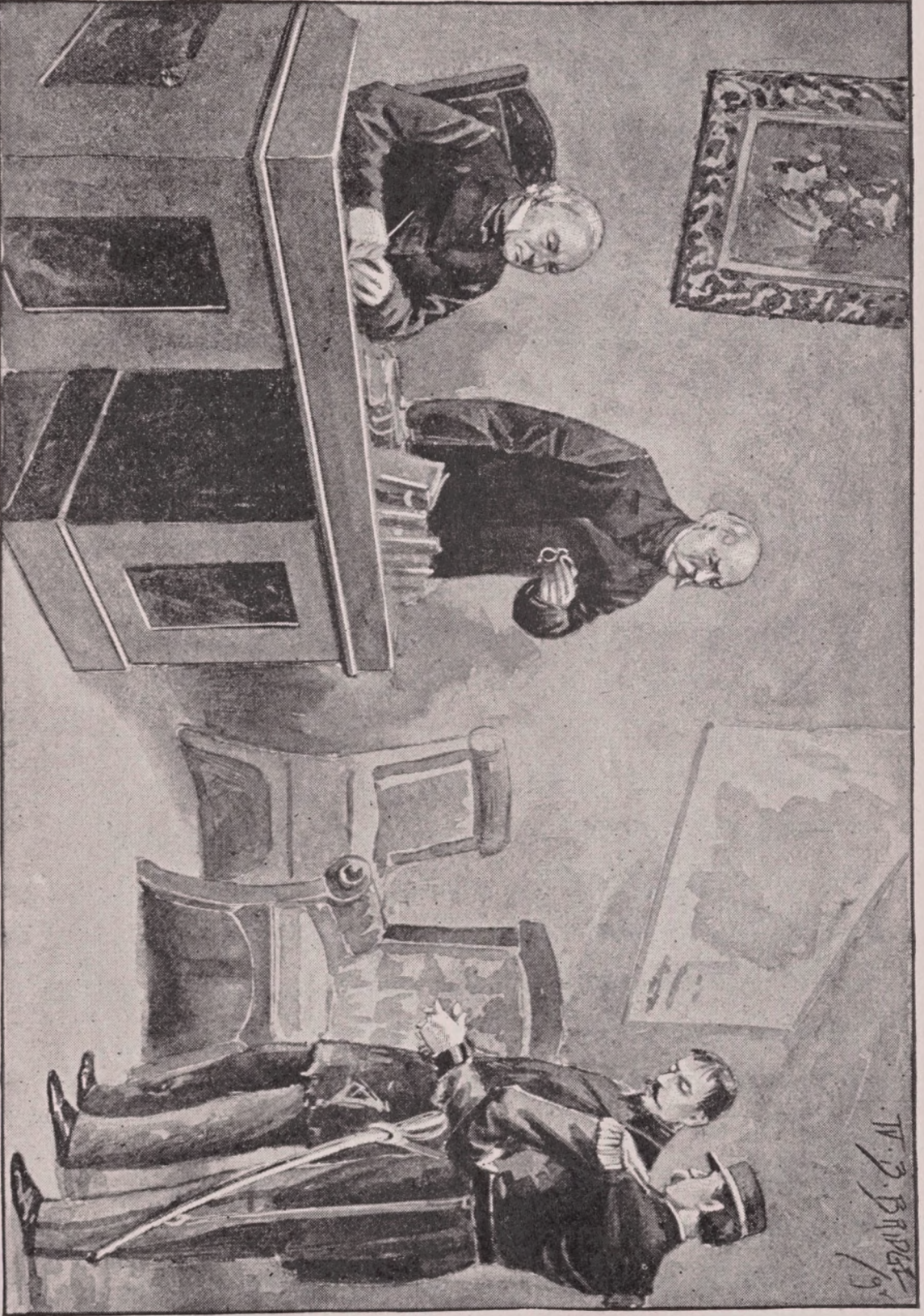
"Well, sir, that is easily settled. We will interrogate the culprit, and see what he says of it. He is here, they will bring him to us."

The minister tapped his bell, and a dapper little man answered the summons in an instant.

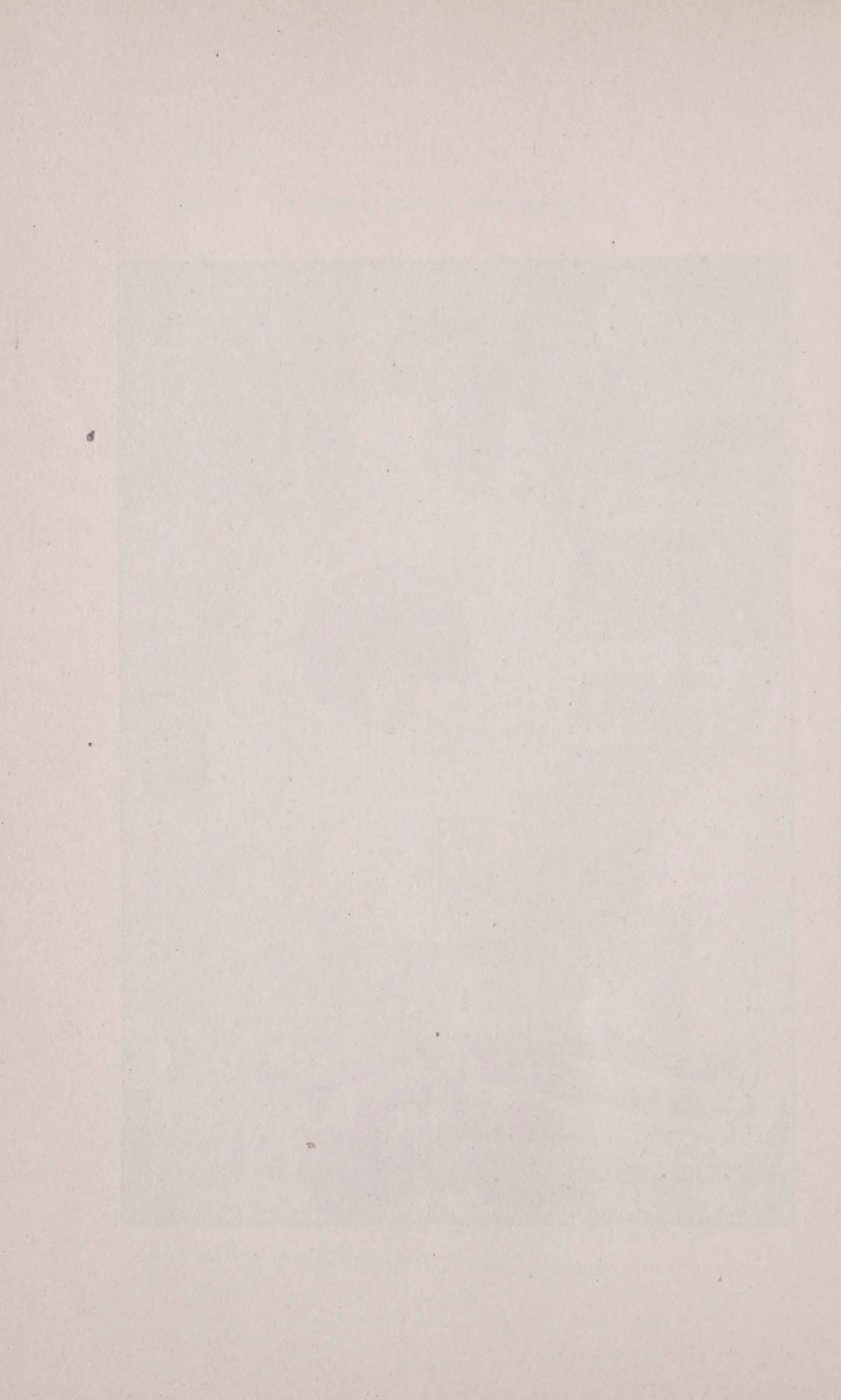
"Let them bring in Marcel Besnard," said the minister. A long silence followed, and the old count sat sturdily in his seat knowing they would not bring in his son. The minister crossed his arms and leaned back. A smile of satisfaction played about his lips. Presently the sound of chains dragging along the flagged hall was heard. They approached the door, and Marcel was led in by a policeman. His face was white and haggard, his clothes were torn and covered with mud, and on his wrists were a pair of handcuffs.

On seeing his father, the young man almost fainted; the policeman had to sustain him.

"Father! Father!" he cried, and then dropped his head. The old count rose slowly, and when at full height faced his son.



MARCEL WAS LED IN BY A POLICEMAN.



"You ought to know, sir, of what you are accused!"

"I only know one thing. I wanted to kill someone."

"Kill—the Emperor?"

"I did not know it was the Emperor. I thought it was another; still, I admit, even knowing that it was the Emperor I would have shot."

He stopped and cried out:

"Father! Father!"

During this time the minister was examining some papers and presently said:

"Marcel Besnard, you are accused of premeditation, and of lying in ambush."

"It's wrong!"

"I hope so for your sake. Still you must admit that this Princess de Carpegna put you in relation with a band of Mazzinians in this city. One of the men arrested this morning some distance out on the Central railroad has confessed the fact. Don't deny it. The fact is incontrovertible. Some one saw you enter one of their dwellings in Montmartre where an old man died. The porter has given your description. Besides, your ex-mistress declared when she saw you, 'That is Marcel. He

is like his father—worthy son,' or something of that kind. It is clear."

"Quite clear!"

"Silence! let me finish! You ought to know, I imagine, who in reality the so-called princess was. No? It seems incredible. The same Italian, the friend of the woman, who was arrested, told the police she was a prima donna of the slums, sang in the streets and the low drinking shops of London for a living. Her real name is Rose Lavetti."

The Count Besnard shrunk as if struck by a weapon, and bent his head on his breast.

"Lavetti! yes, her name was Lavetti," said Marcel, hardly disturbed by the announcement.

"Yes," continued the minister, addressing himself half way towards the count, "she is the daughter of a man condemned on the second of December, an insurgent taken at Var, and afterwards—assassinated—or at least shot—twice—to make sure. He is the man whom the Mazzinists, carbonari, and revolutionists generally call the Martyr of the Midi in their pamphlets and books. His name was Scipione Lavetti."

The minister stopped short, and the Count Besnard rose to his feet.

"Finish, sir," he said, "finish. He whom they call the martyr was taken with arms in his hands, and was shot twice by me, as you know;" and throwing his arms up he cried aloud, with eyes raised to heaven:

"Ah, God in heaven, justice from thy sacred hand is blessed! I bend before thy mighty anger—oh, God! oh, God!" And he resumed his seat.

"Take away your prisoner," said the minister to the policeman, "but remain at hand, I shall want you."

The policeman pushed Marcel before him, and they were soon out of the presence of the minister.

There was a long pause. The minister took his seat; the count buried his head in his hands. The band of the guard was heard in the distance, playing the "De La Reine Hortense;" after a bit it changed to a song of the old victories, "Look to the safety of the Empire," that had not gone many bars when a hearty applause was extended to it. The Emperor appeared at one of the balconies of the palace, and the people in the Carrousel saw him. At this the minister rose, and addressed the Count Besnard:

"You hear, count, what enthusiasm, what transports of joy. No one would dare say to-day that the silence of the people is the lesson of kings. The empire is henceforth indestructible."

He watched the mute despair of the old man a few seconds; then, in a soft and feeling accent, as if touched with compassion for him, said:

"Take courage, count. The Emperor esteems and loves you. He remembers your devotion and assistance in the dark days, and has complete faith in your loyalty."

The old man never moved, he seemed like one struck dead. Still the change in the minister's manner did not escape him. What was coming next?

"My dear count," continued the wily statesman, "the Council of State will meet presently in extraordinary session. You will be present, will you not?"

"I! I!" stammered the old man, "no! I no longer belong to the Council of State. I place my resignation now in your hands."

"What nonsense! I refuse it."

"Still," replied the count, looking up, and speaking bitterly, "I could not remain a coun-

cilor of the empire, having for a son an assassin of the Emperor."

"I refuse your resignation. France has too much need of your experience and judgment. You will be at the sitting. The ministers will be there, and I shall be there myself. We expect to submit some important propositions. Among them a law of general security. At all events, it will be well for the council to ask for this law in the address that it shall send to the Emperor. Such an initiate would be in its praise, it would produce an excellent moral effect, and give an evidence of the council's devotion. An end must be put to these anarchists and creators of disorder. Ask with us that these unworthy citizens shall be put beyond the pale—men tainted with '48, the old reds. It may be a measure not quite legal, it is true, as it would be retroactive; but just, being necessary."

"How could these measures be just," said the count, "being illegal?"

"Yes, I know, I know! That comes from your old judicial probity—it protests; it cries out indignantly; it rises in opposition. These scruples are fair and admirable, I know, and do you honor, but I must continue. The leg-

islature will approve with enthusiasm. But you, the Council of State, you are generally not over docile; indeed, you are frequently a trifle mutinous, putting small obstacles in the way. Certain of your members will raise an agitation, cry out, 'This is too arbitrary,' and, maybe, ruin our projects—you, my dear friend, you will vote the law. Better still, your eloquence shall win it for us. Your voice has great weight in the council; your austere rhetoric and grand principles are admired; the councilors defer to your judgment; you are the chief of the opposition, dangerous to us, and still more so to itself. So then, to-day, presently, you will speak, you shall gain us what we want."

"And my conscience, sir?" inquired the count, his eyes fixed on the minister.

The minister put his hand on the old man's shoulder in a familiar fashion, and answered:

"Your conscience, my dear count! It will understand without much trouble that you are a father, that your Emperor implores, and that France orders "

A blush of shame purpled the face of the old councilor of state; his eyes brightened, and a scornful smile crept into his hanging

lip. He rose suddenly, and bowing low, said:

“My conscience has only too well understood you, sir. I shall defend your law.”

Then, with a trembling step, he went towards the door, and, that time, the minister accompanied him to the street.

XXXII

THE SENTENCE

When the door was shut on Count Brutus Besnard the minister went back and sat down in his large arm-chair. The smile had fled from his face; the man became himself, nervous, uneasy, anxious. He appeared buried in thought a moment, his forehead bathed in perspiration, a twitching movement of the shoulders announcing a secret agitation within. After a bit he rose and marched up and down his office in a fever of excitement. While he walked about his room with uneven steps, he stopped in jerks, as if pulled up suddenly by some unseen and controlling influence, before a picture—a portrait of Armand Duplessis, Cardinal and Duke de Richelieu—and examined it at length.

Then with a stroke of his gong he summoned his attendant.

“Bring Marcel Besnard here, and dismiss the police agent who previously accompanied him.

One word more. Here is a letter for my colleague of the Interior; take it yourself. Tell him that I answer for everything—but I expect that I shall be allowed to act as I think fit. I need twenty-four hours; I assume the whole responsibility.” He handed the confidential missive to the secretary who went off to accomplish his mission.

When he was again alone, the minister was seized with a strange uneasiness. He dropped his head between his hands; he was trembling violently.

The noise of a door opened softly caused him to raise his head. Marcel Besnard walked into the room. A few seconds passed while both men looked at one another amid profound silence.

The minister observed the young man with a severe eye and a frowning face. Marcel, timid and fearful, waited until he was addressed.

Presently, waving his hand theatrically, the minister said: “You are free, Besnard.”

An incredulous astonishment broke over the face of the viscount. The minister continued:

“I said you are free—did you hear me?”

His voice was rough and hard, his face had

recovered its iron mask. He added petulantly:

"There—you are free; now what do you intend to do?"

"Whatever I am ordered."

"That's right! Now, understand me properly. I am acting on my personal and private authority and responsibility. Public action against you is not satisfied; you might be arrested again to-day, to-morrow, do you understand? No, I see you don't. I must make it clearer. You could not be allowed to be accused and sit as a prisoner on a bench in the court of assizes, being the son of a high functionary of the imperial government. Now what are your intentions?"

"To leave the country."

"Foolish. Your extradition would be demanded. You have not understood me. Listen attentively. You are named the Viscount Besnard; you are an auditor to the Council of State, and your father occupies an elevated rank in the empire. It won't do that proceedings should be commenced against you even in default. Am I clear enough now?"

He paused, waiting for a reply.

The two men again looked into each other's eyes, and tried to measure one another there.

Marcel sought the minister's meaning, and the minister sought to convey it without being compelled to put it into language. The silence was terrible. Both breathed heavily. The beating of their hearts was distinctly audible. Both were pale as death, and both knew there was death in the air.

Time swept by, and neither changed his position.

It would be soon midday, and at one exactly there was a cabinet council at the Tuileries.

"Well, then, you won't understand?" cried the minister brutally. "I thought you had intelligence and they said you were brave; you must disappear."

Marcel bounded from the floor at the suddenness of the shock. He recovered in an instant and walking up to the minister's desk said:

"Take my own life!"

The minister remained impassible. Marcel bent forward to him and asked almost in a whisper: "You demand that I shall take my own life?"

"Oh!" replied the minister, "that is a lofty way of talking, you may suit yourself. I said disappear—simply disappear."

"Disappear!" and Marcel laughed bitterly—"so be it, I accept your humbler method of expression. I understand."

He retired a step or two, crossed his arms, and then interrogated the minister in turn.

"And what becomes of the Princess de Carpegna?"

"That woman has left France."

Marcel Besnard laughed again.

"Through the imperial clemency! I understand! I have understood! All is arranged. Now the son of the high functionary is ready to die."

At that instant, the warning of the clock on the mantel announced the hour. Noon struck—the minister pointed to the clock with his finger.

"It will be a mysterious disappearance, will it not? Above all, no family scene. That would be in the worst taste; spare your father. He had the mother, you the daughter, don't recall these facts to him now."

"What do you mean?" cried Marcel, almost beside himself.

"Many years ago," went on the minister with his malice all alive, "Brutus Besnard seduced the beautiful wife of Scipione Lavetti,

and took her from her husband. The latter came to France to seek revenge, and join the insurgents in the Var until his opportunity should come at his enemy. In the meantime the enemy got at him, and he did not survive. The wife was cast off and died in poverty in England. That was the secret, and the meaning of your meeting with Rose Lavetti, Princess de Carpegna."

"It is time I disappeared."

"Midday. Good-bye. You have still twenty-four hours."

He rose, to cut the audience short, and with his old theatrical gesture, sawing the air, said, "I have your word. You are free."

Marcel bowed, and went slowly out of the room.

XXXIII

THE CRUCIFIX OF NOTRE DAME

The crowd which, a little while before, had almost filled the Place du Carrousel, had dispersed. The military parade was over. There were no more grenadiers defiling, no more music rhythmmed with drums, and calling to the field of honor, no more of the lounging enthusiasm of the palace either, all the cries of "long live the Emperor," had ceased. Alone in the vast court of the Tuileries, on the right and left of the great arch, the two cuirassiers of the guard, sentinels on parade, sat on their horses, immovable. The wind whistled from the north, under a pale blue sky, the cold was dry and biting, and caught pedestrians sharply on the face and ears. The Count Besnard, however, had passed the wickets of the Carrousel, and gained the royal bridge. Like a man lost in thought, unconscious of his acts, the hour and the distance, he walked mechanically toward the palace of

the State Council. At the angle of the pavilion of Flora, he stopped suddenly, the idea of self seemed to have awakened him.

Yes, certainly, he had to speak that day, defend the project of the ministers, and, at the price of his honor, save, perhaps, the life of his son. But the moment of cruel torture had not yet come. Three full hours remained for meditation with himself. With a brusque movement, Count Besnard retraced his steps, and moved along at a rapid pace. He went straight on, at hazard, taking the line of the quays indefinitely, here and there glancing at the river as he passed. His head was splitting, his heart felt as if ready to break, and his legs trembled beneath him. He continued his march, nevertheless, talking to himself aloud, and the passers-by turned to look at him and smiled. Sometimes a burst of anger broke out on his lips and he cried: "The miserable wretch!" But his voice soon lost its anger, and became compassionate, and he exclaimed: "My unhappy boy"

The striking of a clock aroused him from the wide-awake somnambulism. He was in front of the city hall, and on the facade of Boccador midday was announced. The next

moment three silver strokes went up from the church of Saint Gervaise. The church of Saint Severin answered them in grave and measured tones. From the side of the mountain Saint Genevieve joined in, and from parish to parish the Angelus struck out, and the religious heart of Paris, seemed, by one accord, to ascend toward the space filled by the eternal. Softened, chastened, charmed, his soul soothed by the sweet music of the bells, the Count Besnard listened to the Ave Maria of the clocks. A scruple then assailed his conscience. What! he was suffering, and not praying!

On the right, beyond the houses, bordering the river, he perceived the tall profile of Notre Dame, its two towers rising towards heaven, and the Angelus gently invited his heart to mingle in its supplication. "Sancta Maria, ora pro nobis."

"Oh! yes," he exclaimed, "in the day of affliction, it is near you that it is good to shed a tear."

In answer to that appeal the count went forward with all his speed, and was soon in front of the great church.

There were not many people in the church,

and the obscurity, the silence, the mystery of the place fell like balm on the overwrought senses of the Count Besnard.

On the side of the "Septeritrion" to which he went, the railings shutting in the lateral chapels were closed. One of them, however, was ajar. He opened it, and going through knelt before the altar.

"There, at all events," he thought, "no one would venture to disturb his devotions."

He knelt without looking around, and did not notice in the darkness, a strange object leaning against the wall. It was a gigantic crucifix, a work of the XIIth century, at once unique and grand. The author of the figure had desired to pass into the wood through his unskilled fingers, all the ardor, all the tenderness, all the wonder, all the mysticism of his Christian faith. He had selected the moment when the Son of God, become truly man, under the stress of pain, sent up to his Father the cry of human hopelessness, the terrible, "Lama Sabacthani." "Why hast thou abandoned me?"

The legs and arms were twisted, the bust was convulsed, showing in its thinness and agony the skeleton of the thorax—the forehead

was crowned with thorns, the side pierced by a spear and from it seemed to flow blood like tears; the head hung on the shoulder, horrible with suffering, the mouth was partly open; a few moments longer and the divine breath would pass away, from over Jerusalem, the Gentiles and the world. Through the livid light thrown across a stained glass window that crucifix was frightful to behold. The Count Besnard had not perceived it. Broken with fatigue and trembling with fever he rose in a few seconds and sunk heavily into a chair, turning his back on the image. A confused noise of steps and singing caught his attention, and he looked up.

Below, in the northern transept, they were celebrating the obsequies of some one. It was a modest service, consisting of low mass at a lateral chapel, a simple psalm at intervals—the humble funeral of one of the poor of this world.

From where he was seated the Count Besnard could see nothing; but he understood what was going forward.

“Another soul liberated from its misery.”

He knelt again, remembering that he had come there to pray. But his prayers came slowly and painfully.

"Paternoster—fiat voluntas tua.

"Oh!—oh! Thy will was heavy, O Lord! Thou hast sorely burdened, oh! my God! an old man and a father!"

Presently above the low, soft voice of the officiating priest at the funeral, rose the psalms of the singers. They were repeating the "Dies Iræ." The Count Besnard heard the words and said them as they fell on his ear:

"Day of Anger—Day of Days. Death has spread his standard. The age has fallen into dust." A curious hallucination took possession of the old man as he spoke. He thought he was assisting alone at his own funeral. He, so long a judge of men, had passed to judgment. He was about to appear before the Incorruptible. He then began to plead his cause. The voices of the psalmodists took a lamentable tone and went on:

"Oh! unhappy that I am, what shall I answer; what shall be my defense at that hour when the Just Himself will be in anguish?"

The count replied:

"This: I have always observed Thy commandments, I have abstained and fasted, I devoutly hear mass every morning, and many

times during the year I go to communion, and receive my Creator. I am a Christian. Why then dost Thou scourge so severely the servant of Thy law?"

Gaining confidence he continued: "I was always honest, and listened to the dictates of conscience. I have never noticed the person of a criminal, only his crime. I remember one day seeing at the assizes a rich homicide. The family of the murderer offered me a large sum if I would admit of some extenuating circumstances, but his head fell.

"I remember also that, pursuing in accordance with my duty, a fraudulent bankrupt, a relative of the man, a corrupt minister, requested me to abandon the case—the thief got his due.

"I am poor; why, then, O Lord, dost Thou scourge so heavily an honest man?"

"And Lavetti?" cried a voice near the count that caused him to jump to his feet. It was a strange, unearthly voice, and the count could hardly tell whether he heard it, or merely thought he heard it. He gazed all around, and the only thing in sight was the great crucifix. The image seemed to laugh through the new light cast on it, and the count trem-

bled from head to foot as he gazed at the colossal figure on the cross. There was a look of anger in the face, and a mocking smile on the lip—the smile of Him who came to the world, not with peace, but a sword. Pale, haggard, and frightened, the visionary contemplated that formidable figure on the cross. Presently terror struck into his soul, and he fell fainting on the floor. He recovered after a while, and got on his knees once more.

“Yes, yes,” he cried, “Thou art the equitable, the God of truth, who will not tolerate whited sepulchres or pharasaical consciences—Lavetti! The blood of the man is on my magisterial robe, on my hands of an honest man, over all that I am, or have. It drowns me—suffocates me! Lavetti! I received the price of that assassination, and I have the pieces still. *Pecunia mea mecum*. I am a councilor of state! Lavetti! O mystery of justice, implacable patience of eternity! It is that man’s daughter who is killing my boy! She is my scourge. Thy moral, O God!”

He raised his head, and extending his clasped hands toward the crucifix, exclaimed:

“Oh, Christ, Thou chastisest me; and Thou art right! right! right! My soul is vile, and

I have the heart of a scoundrel! I sold out both only a little while ago; I delivered up my conscience at a word! I promised that minister, suborner of honest men, that I would defend his law. I knew that it was an infamous law, designed to strike down innocent men; a desperate law, that would cause many fathers to weep as I weep now—and yet, I gave my word that I would support it. Speak, oh, speak! What ought I to do?"

Then by the pale light of the window, which stole across the face of the Christ, he thought he saw the angry smile change to a look of gentleness, and then, before him there, he perceived Christ—who slowly raised His head as if to make the words of the commandment more distinctly heard—say in a voice of ineffable sweetness: "Thy duty."

"My duty;" gasped the old man, whose soul was filled with anguish. "My duty—and Marcel, my unhappy boy."

The Christ on the crucifix still smiled, in the same compassionate and sympathetic way, and finally whispered, sorrowfully: "Thy duty all entire, thy duty of expiation, so that at last I may be able to give thee the kiss of peace."

XXXIV

THE COUNCIL OF STATE

It was nearly three o'clock when the Count Besnard, throwing off the ecstasy which had held him so long in the great church, rose and left Notre Dame. He took a cab at the door, and was driven to the hall in which the State Council met. It was already well filled, and every preparation had been made for a long session. The count took his usual seat. At the end of half an hour the president stated the business of the meeting, and there was a long silence. The minister of state then explained the law for which the consent of the council was asked. He showed that it had become a necessity on account of the attacks on the Emperor's life, and was urgently demanded by the exigencies of the time. "The beast must be muzzled," he said.

The question in the minds of many of the councilors was, "Where did the beast come from? Was it a foreign beast, or was it a do-

mestic one? Were they Italians who were committing these attacks on the new government, or Frenchmen who regarded their rights as sacrificed?"

The minister's analysis of the new law was received with glacial respect. A short silence ensued, and then low whispers ran from point to point in the vast hall. One said: "They want to draw a vote of surprise from the council;" another, "The law is illegal;" a third, "It cannot be endorsed here, it is retroactive;" another, "It is a work of vengeance, not justice." A profound silence followed. Everybody seemed to dread the sound of his own voice. Who would dare to speak? At that moment the minister of state leaned over toward the president, and whispered to him. The president rose, and asked if any member wished to address the council.

Another silence, and then a voice said faintly: "Yes, I."

"Ah! the Count Besnard," said the president resuming his seat, a smile of satisfaction on his face.

XXXV

THE KISS OF PEACE

A general movement took place in the council as the old man stood up. Every eye was centered on him, each watched him keenly. He was straight and firm as in his best days; the voice, weak at first, took on a sonorous, even tone that reached the furthest limits of the place.

"We were convoked urgently, gentlemen," he said; "now here we are, what do they want with us? Approbation without reserve, or advice? A little while ago the president dared to say, 'Approve at once, you can discuss later.' A strange invitation under an imprudent form, which you have already rejected by your silence. But a dumb protestation is not enough for your courage. We are the counselors of the empire, its honor is in danger, our words ought to reach the Emperor, and give him our opinion. The grandeur of

an assembly is measured by the height of its duty. Gentlemen, let us do our duty."

A certain agitation was produced by this solemn exordium. The secretaries around the president affected to talk and laugh. The count proceeded: "It is proposed to us to vote on a law pretending to be a measure of general security. They tell us, 'France is ill, bleed her in the four members.' That was how Robespierre spoke in the days of Prairial, year 11."

"No such allusions, if you please," said one of the ministers.

The Count Besnard turned to the group of ministers and said:

"Yes, I understand; a name like that sounds unpleasantly in your ears. Well, let us search for others. Two governments of the past seem to me to inspire you, serving you as models, much more than as lessons. They were the inventors of exceptional laws, the artisans of vengeance, and not the workmen of justice. In 1640 they were called the Stuarts. They disappeared. In 1815 they were called the Bourbons; where are they? The fact is, the blood of man is a dew so fruitful that no one knows where and when it may arise; to shed

it brings a harvest of hate without pardon, of crimes without remorse. It cries to God, and God listens to it. Prynne is nailed to the pillory, but in his turn Charles the First mounts the scaffold; Michael Ney fell riddled with bullets, and Sourel springs up with the knife in his hand. You have struck, you shall be stricken; you have made others weep, you shall weep also."

"Remember your own acts, sir," cried an insolent voice from the ministerial bench.

The minister of state had risen in his place. He was scarlet with anger. The two men looked at one another for a moment, and then the count, bowing low to the minister, continued:

"My acts! Yes, yes. I remember them. Always! Always! I never forget them. During the past seven years I have become only too familiar with remorse."

The minister made a threatening gesture toward the count, and replied:

"When a man is chastised by remorse, sir, he ought to conceal it in retreat!"

"You demand my resignation?" returned the count, with all his old fire and dignity. "You shall not have it! Depose me if you

dare! I rose here in my place to address my colleagues, and no power on earth shall prevent me from calling on them: 'Deny this law, it is sinister—throw it out, it is infamous!'"

An ill-repressed excitement ran through the hall. All the ministers stood up. The assembly was agitated, overawed; a similar scene had never before broken upon the dignified calm of the councilors.

The president endeavored to restore order and harmony but found his voice had not reached the audience. At last turning to the old count he asked:

"Have you finished, sir?"

The Count Besnard had sunk into his seat. His eyes were closed, the arms hung down outside the chair, the head hung on the chest, as if he had fainted.

When the president addressed him he was on his feet again like a shot.

"No! I have not finished!" he cried. "But it is no longer to the council that I speak but to my sovereign.

"Pity, sire, pity for yourself, and yours. History has revealed to us a formidable dogma in the families of kings—the child is too

often the expiator of his parents. Look at all the last of the Valois—that miserable line of Catherine of Medicis, struck down one after the other by imbecility, madness, and worse. It was in the blood. Pity! Pity!!”

All of a sudden the old man shrieked as if in intense pain, beat the air with his hands and sank on the floor. His face was convulsed, and a stream of blood was issuing from his mouth.

“A doctor, quick!” cried those in his vicinity, and several stooped to raise him. M. Boudois tore open the clothes, felt the heart, and in accents of terror exclaimed: “The rupture of an aneurism!”

A strange alarm now weighed on the council. Everyone was moving, and pressing round the invalid.

He never stirred. In the silence the rattle in the throat could be heard. It became fainter and fainter, life was ebbing. When the doctor arrived it was all over. The God of Notre Dame, the Christ with the sweet smile, had not deceived him, the work of His mercy had just been accomplished. He had given the old man the kiss of peace.

XXXVI

OVER THE PRECIPICE

Gabrielle lounged about in her room all day, a prey to many emotions. She was uneasy about her father, who had gone out very ill, and nervous about Marcel, whom she had not seen since the previous day. Jack floated in her mind a good deal, but in a steady, luminous way that brought her courage and comfort. She tried to read, but could not. She sat at her piano, but could not play, and her voice appeared to have left her. And so the tedious hours crept by, and the sun went down without bringing about a change. As the lamps were being lighted Marcel came in. His appearance frightened his sister. He looked more like a ghost than a live man.

"Marcel!" she exclaimed when she saw him. "Marcel! Marcel! my brother! what has happened to you?"

"Is our father here?"

"No, he has not come back yet. He was

summoned hastily to a meeting of the council and has not yet returned."

"Yes, yes, I know."

"But what has happened? What have you done?"

"I am going away, little one, maybe for some time. Say to my father that I came here to beg his forgiveness, and that I do so although I cannot wait to receive it."

"You are not going with that woman again, Marcel?"

"You must ask me no questions; I cannot answer them. I am going into my room to make the necessary preparations, and I hope you will conduct yourself in this trying ordeal like the daughter of a brave man."

"I will try, Marcel."

He left her, and retired to his own apartment. She sank into a chair, and sobbed aloud. She was sure the strange woman had again obtained control of him, and was going to spirit him away.

"Oh! Jack! Jack!" she cried in despair, thinking that Jack was the only power on earth which could help her.

At that moment a servant entered the room with Jack's card on a salver.

"At once!" exclaimed the helpless girl. "Bring him here!" and she cast the card away.

Jack came and his face terrified her almost as much as that of Marcel.

"You have bad news," she cried as she ran toward him, "bad news of my father?"

"Yes," he said, slowly. "I have bad news of Count Besnard. Be prepared for the worst."

"He is dead," she exclaimed, and fell fainting on his breast.

Jack called for assistance, and Marcel, hearing the voice, came into the room.

"You here, sir?" he said to Jack, half in friendship, half in anger.

"I have the right to be here, sir," replied Jack; "your father gave me that right when he was made acquainted with my intentions toward your sister."

"Oh!" said Marcel. "Perhaps it is better that way."

"I hope it may be."

"Have you seen my father, sir?"

"No, but his body will arrive here presently. I gave orders to that effect."

"He is dead?"

"Yes, he died in the chamber of the Council of State after a noble speech."

"My God!"

"He fell dead in his place."

"My God! My God! And all through me."

Marcel turned on his heel and strode out of the house.

"Where is he going? Where is he going?" cried Gabrielle on her recovery.

"I will go and see," replied Jack. "There is something strange about him that I do not like."

"Go! Go!" cried Gabrielle, "and bring me word soon. You are all that is left me now!"

"You remain and watch over the dead, I shall go and look after the living."

Marcel had too good a start of Jack to get caught, and was lost in the night. It was late the following afternoon when he obtained news of him at his notary's.

"I can't tell you anything of his whereabouts," said the lawyer, "but I can tell you that I think he meditates some rash act."

"Why so?"

"He has arranged all his affairs as if death were not far off."

"I suspected that."

"That man is going to fight a duel or commit suicide."

"Suicide, I fear."

As Jack left the office of the lawyer, an old man came up to him, and asked if he were in search of the Viscount Besnard.

"Yes," said Jack, "I am."

"I can give you some information of him if it's worth anything."

"It's worth a good price if it's correct. Come and tell it to me as I go along. I am pushed for time."

He put the old man into his cab, and drove off. The fellow had been a detective and now hung around the lawyers' offices for any odd jobs he could pick up.

"Well," he said, "how much down?"

"Nothing."

"That's a bad beginning."

"You must do the beginning."

"Where are you going now?"

"To look for a woman!"

"Hi! Hi! You're fly! Guess you won't find her."

"Do you know her name"?

"I do."

"Tell it, and I'll give you a napoleon."

"The Princess de Carpegna."

"There's your money. Now go ahead."

“Well, the gentleman you are after came to a friend of mine last night, and asked him if he could do a trick in his line. He said he could. The gent then explained he was to go to a certain house in Montmartre and ask for a woman, giving the name. If she were not there to come back and report, if she was to say that the prince wanted her to meet him at a certain spot this side of Cantulupe on the sea coast. The meaning being that she was to take ship and sail away. My friend went to the house, and found the woman there. She said, ‘All right,’ and in token that it was all right gave him a withered bunch of wild roses. When your friend, the viscount, saw those wild roses, he turned white, snatched them up, and crushed them to powder in his hands. He paid a handsome fee and left. We then made a few inquiries. We found out that she had been discovered to be in with a band of Italian conspirators, and had been ordered to leave the country. The spot at which he requested the woman to meet him was a high promontory, running out into the sea. A shoal of pointed rocks grinned beneath; in point of fact, the loneliest and most dangerous place on the whole coast of

France. She went on the 10:30 Southern Express this morning, and he on the 2:15. If you take the train that leaves in half an hour I should not wonder if you catch up with him, for he is on an accommodation train. He means mischief, and has planned it adroitly. It's none of our business."

"There are five napoleons for you. Tell this man to drive me to the station."

The old detective jumped out and Jack was soon rolling along toward the railroad station.

He got to Val d'Avez and Lutean, but heard nothing at either place of the parties he was in quest of.

He hired a horse at a little village near Fecamp, and rode along the coast for several miles.

Presently he came upon a sight that chilled the marrow in his bones. A man and woman were struggling on the rocks, and the man was dragging the woman inch by inch to the edge of the precipice. She was fighting hard to get free, and screaming for help. There was no help at hand, no one to hear her. Jack jumped from his horse and ran forward. The woman recognized him as he neared them and screamed to him for help and assistance.



GRASPING ROSE BY THE WAIST, HE SPRANG FROM THE ROCK.

Marcel recognized him too, and grasping Rose by the waist, lifted her from the earth, and sprang from the rock into the seething waters below.

They never came to the surface. Jack stood watching for a long time, and then, convinced that all was over, turned sadly away and went back to Paris.

The Count Besnard was buried with due honor, and Gabrielle went to become Jack's wife in England, and live a life of calm and happiness.

THE END.

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